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श्री राम जय राम जय जय राम
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GURU'S GRACE

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MOTHER KRISHNABAI

Translated
by
SWAMI RAMDAS

PUBLISHED BY
ANANDASHRAM
ANANDASHRAM P.O.,
KANHANGAD.
SOUTH INDIA

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Guru's Grace

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(Autobiography of Mother Krishnabai)

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SRI SWAMI RAMDAS

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

We have great pleasure in publishing this long-awaited Autobiography of Mother Krishnabai as translated in English by Pujya Swami Ramdas—his last literary legacy. At the express wish of the Mother we have left unaltered, in many places, the typescript as left by Pujya Papa.

Anandashram
22nd January, 1964

FOREWORD

This is the life-story of a simple but profound Soul, narrated by herself in her own rare and charming manner. The reader will not fail to observe its uniqueness in that it presents clearly the mediaeval style and expression.

The special feature of this autobiography is that it is addressed entirely to her 'Papa' (Ramdas), and all the persons mentioned therein are considered by her as Papa himself in those forms.

The original is the Kannada rendering of the life dictated by the Mother in plain Konkani to Srimati Ganga, one of the Ashram girls, who is proficient both in Konkani and Kannada. The English translation is done by Ramdas as inspired by the Mother.

The book will surely prove to be of very high value to all spiritual aspirants.

Anandashram
15th July, 1963

Ramdas

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Guru's Grace

Sadguru Sri Swami Ramdas—our most Beloved Papa
who is all and beyond all

Mother Krishnabai

CHAPTER ONE

Ecstatic Union

O INFINITE PAPA! VERILY, I AM your own embodiment. At the desire of some devotees, who are none other than yourself, you inspired me to make several attempts to dictate my life-story, incorporating in it all events from the beginning of my life, even before you revealed yourself in me. But every time, I could not continue the work after some progress. Now again I am taking it up.

O all-pervading Papa! In 1928 you awakened in me a strong urge to become one with your eternal Being, and I came to you. After passing one year in your holy company I appealed to you to initiate me with the Ram Mantra. All-compassionate as you are, you gave me the most sacred Mantra. You then advised me to stop reading any kind of books, to give up the use of rosary while repeating the Mantra and to discontinue the worship of images. Instead, you counselled me to look upon all beings and creatures in the world as Ram and to consider the service rendered to any one of them as service and worship of Ram himself.

O kindness-incarnate Papa! As I went on reciting Ramnam, the remembrance of my relatives came to me with added force. To get over this hurdle, you asked me to take whatever thought that arose in me as Ram himself. Whenever I thought of God as Ram I felt God was far away from me. But when I thought of God as Papa I felt his nearness. By this practice, after some time, I realized all my relatives are yourself and the thoughts about them as such disappeared. Then I looked upon everybody as you alone. I got the vision to behold you as everyone and everything.

O Papa, the lover of devotees! During my spiritual discipline I reflected how from my childhood onward you assumed various forms to guide me on the path. I recollected how you spoke as those persons and made me also speak. Further, all events of my life started crowding in my mind vividly one after another.

O Papa, the infinite Being! Grant me wisdom to narrate my life in all truth and sweetness without any exaggeration.

O Papa, the divine Mother! You are omnipresent and having become everything you are also transcendent. You pervade within and without all that exists. You are above beginning and end. You are the sole protector of all.

O compassionate Papa! In the worlds you reside in entirety in all beings—even in the smallest particle. Likewise you dwell in me in all your perfection. Now grant me power to describe your magnificent glory manifest in me.

O Sadguru! As a first step to the realization of your omnipresent Being, even before my advent into the world, you prepared the ground for that supreme consummation. When the time of my birth was approaching you caused to spread in the small village Haliyal, where my parents lived, the dreadful disease—plague. As a consequence, all the people of the village had to flee away and take refuge in a neighbouring jungle, at a distance of about four miles from Haliyal. In this calamitous situation my mother and father, who were none other than yourself, took upon themselves, with all their heart, to provide, as far as they could, accommodation and other conveniences to the refugees. When helping the sufferers they considered them as their own. They felt that the happiness of those people in trouble was their own happiness. When thus my mother and father were revealing their benign and benevolent nature, in the month of September 1903, on Mahalaya Amavasya, the prominent new moon day of the year, as willed by you, I was born inside one of the huts in the jungle.

O birthless and deathless Papa! As my mother and father you poured your love on me and received in response my love in the same measure. By my love to my parents you inspired me to love all their relatives on both sides. Yet, you willed that my love should not be confined to a narrow circle and it expanded beyond this limit.

O Papa, the ocean of compassion! In order to accomplish this aim, you, as my father, taught me to love the image of Dattatreya installed by him in the Nadgar Temple founded by his forefathers, and then expanded my love so that it might go to all who visited the temple for worship. Moreover, when I was about six years old you kindled in me love for Srimat Pandurangashram Swami—the Guru of Chitrapur Saraswat Brahmin community—and also the Gurus preceding him in the line. My love then gained further expansion enfolding in its range all members of my community and I regarded them all as my own people.

O Papa, the embodiment of kindness! At the age of twelve years and three months I was married, which brought me close to all the members of my husband's family, who were, of course, till then strangers to me. I developed love for them all, particularly to my husband's parents. I held them in high estimation and often talked of their all-round good nature. In this manner my love-vision widened extensively. You play all the parts in this world-drama and all events happen in it only by your will.

O Papa, the lover of the humble! When I reached the age of twenty, my husband passed away after a brief illness, leaving me behind with two sons, resulting in my detachment from my relatives and also giving rise in my heart to a growing dispassion towards the world. With a view to preserve my chastity you turned my mind towards you who are all and yet beyond.

O limitless Papa! Even when I was eighteen years old, you had brought me in contact with Sri Tammanna Sastri, a disciple of Sri Gondavali Maharaj, and he initiated me with a Mantra. At the age of twenty to twenty-two I was again initiated by Sri Siddharudha Swami, Sri Chandekar Maharaj and Sri N.V.R. Indeed they are all yourself in those forms. In this way you augmented my devotion for you by the Darshan of these saints and I gained some peace.

O all-pervading Papa! At last by your grace, in June 1928 I felt an intense longing to have you and you alone, and you drew me to your presence.

O Papa, the divine Mother! The moment I saw you, my heart was flooded with joy. The rare delight I then enjoyed was similar to that of a child when it meets its mother after a long separation.

Papa, you are indeed compassion personified. Within only three years of this child's entry into your divine presence, you enabled her to realize your static, changeless and infinite Being. Just as the feeling of I-ness in me pervades all parts of my physical being from head to foot, and yet this 'I' is distinct from the body, so also I came to know that I am at once the universal consciousness and the transcendent Truth.

CHAPTER TWO

Infinite Expansion

(i) *Pranam* (Salutation)

O KINDNESS-INCARNATE PAPA! Do grant me the power to describe comprehensively how you made me your child and enabled me to surrender all actions performed by my body, which is really your own body, made up of its component sense organs, limbs and other parts. Even when I was just born in your creation, you caused me to lay my head on mother earth, which meant on your holy feet.

O kind and loving Papa! By your limitless grace, you became both my mother and father and I took refuge in them, who were to me like your two holy feet, and therefrom in all my relatives and friends.

O compassionate Papa! As my mother and father, you taught me to bow not only at their feet but also at the feet of Gurus and elders. As directed by them, I bowed also before the deities in the shrine at home and in public temples.

My all-permeating Papa! Whenever I had the Darshan of our community Guru, Srimat Pandurangashram Swami, you prompted me to lay my head with all devotion and reverence at his holy feet.

O infinite Papa! After I married at the age of twelve years and three months you inspired me to bow first before all my elders and then before my husband and his elderly relatives.

O Sadguru! At the time of my salutation at the feet of Srimat Pandurangashram Swami, Srimat Anandashram Swami, Sri Tammanna Sastri and Sri Siddharudha Swami, I bowed down with the same reverence also at the feet of all the devotees who came for their Darshan. Similarly I saluted Sri Chandekar Maharaj. In this way you enhanced my attitude of reverence causing it to pervade a widening sphere.

O compassion personified Papa! Thus expanding my devotional vision, you at last brought me to the place where you lived. By your Darshan my adoration rose still higher and I felt no satisfaction even though I placed my head on your feet repeatedly several times. So much so, when once my head touched your feet I did not like to remove it from there. As I was not satisfied by my Pranams at your feet you told me: 'Ram pervades all animate and inanimate creation. So cultivate respect for all beings and things alike.' By thus instructing me you absorbed me into your infinite and omnipresent Being. It was only then that I was completely satisfied.

(ii) *Darshana* (Vision)

My immanent and transcendent Papa! When by your will I appeared in this world as a new-born baby, I could not recognise you in anybody. As my understanding grew I looked at my mother with affection. Therefrom my love was extended to my father, brothers and sisters. As advised by my parents I learned to love with devotion the temple deities, relatives and friends.

O love-incarnate Papa! Similarly I looked upon with reverence my Kula Gurus,—Srimat Pandurangashram Swami and the Gurus who are his predecessors,—and thereafter all members of my community.

O compassionate Papa! With a view to expand my love-vision you caused my marriage to take place and made me love my husband, his elders and other members of his family who are all indeed yourself.

O Papa who is all-permeating kindness! You created in me love and devotion to Srimat Pandurangashram Swami, Srimat Anandashram Swami, Sri Tammanna Sastri, Sri Siddharudha Swami and Sri Chandekar Maharaj, and also love to the devotees who gathered before these saints. Verily, they are all your own manifestations.

O Papa, the lover of the humble! At last you brought me to your holy presence. From that day my eyes were never tired of seeing you. The very sight of you would well up in my heart rare joy and ecstasy. When thus I was not satisfied, you asked me to develop the vision of beholding all beings with love and respect since Ram has manifested as the entire universe. Having admonished me thus you gave me the experience of my oneness with your infinite Being. Then only I became contented.

(iii) *Shravana* (Audition)

O omnipresent Papa! When I was yet a baby I listened, though not knowing the meaning, to the sounds that fell into my ears from my mother's lips. Then creating in my heart love for the mother, you made me listen ardently to the sounds uttered by her. Gradually you induced me to listen with avidity to the talks of my father, relatives and friends.

My all-loving Papa! You gave me the opportunity to eagerly listen to the Veda Mantras chanted in temples and before Srimat Pandurangashram Swami, besides the tolling of temple bells and the pipe music. Likewise, I heard with great attention the invocations and hymns sung in praise of God. This was all due to your unbounded grace.

O compassionate Papa! When I joined my husband's household I longed to listen to the kind and sweet words from my husband and other elders in the house. In this manner you increased my desire to hear the words of all who came in contact with me.

O omnipresent Papa! In like manner I listened with respect and devotion to the talks and discourses of Srimat Anandashram Swami and Srimat Pandurangashram Swami and also to the sweet words of Sri Tammanna Sastri, Sri Siddharudha Swami and Sri Chandekar Maharaj when they were initiating me with Guru Mantras.

O Papa, the lover of the humble! Thus expanding my power of listening to the voices and words of saints you drew me at last to your feet. Now I was initiated by you with your Ram Mantra. I intently listened to your voice when you were initiating me and also to the delightful sound of the Mantra when I was chanting it by myself with all faith and devotion.

I heard with great eagerness your words saturated with love. Nevertheless, I did not feel satisfied by hearing your voice. Advising me to take all the words that are uttered, as Mantras and praises of Ram, you granted me the realization of your eternal Being. It was now that I was fully satisfied.

(iv) *Ghrana* (Redolence)

O Papa, the giver of bliss! When I was yet a baby, without knowing the difference between fragrant and non-fragrant things, I imbibed all kinds of smells. Later I learnt to appreciate the scent of sandal, incense and other fragrances.

O love-incarnate Papa! Likewise I smelt with love and devotion the sandal paste, Tulsi and flowers offered at the feet of Srimat Pandurangashram Swami, Srimat Anandashram Swami, Sri Tammanna Sastri, Sri Siddharudha Swami and Sri Chandekar Maharaj who are verily your own embodiments.

O infinite Papa! In this manner, having expanded the sphere of my smelling power you called me to your feet. Here I smelt, O lover of devotees, over and over again the sandal paste, Tulsi and flowers offered at your feet, and the Tirtha obtained by washing your feet. Yet I was not satisfied. Then you exhorted me that whatever I smelt was the fragrance of the offering laid at Ram's holy feet. Thereby you granted me the knowledge of your immortal existence. It was now only that I was completely satisfied.

(v) *Pana* (Libation)

My infinite Papa! I grew up from a small baby by suckling milk at my mother's breast. As I became bigger I drank with love all kinds of beverages, especially Panchamrita. Then I drank with devotion the Tirtha of the feet of Srimat Pandurangashram Swami, Srimat Anandashram Swami, Sri Tammanna Sastri, Sri Siddharudha Swami and Sri Chandekar Maharaj. Verily, their feet are your own feet.

O all-pervading Papa! As I went on drinking the Tirtha, my devotion became more and more intense with the consequence you drew me to yourself. Having been attracted to you, I was never satiated by drinking the Tirtha of your feet. I would take jugs after jugs of it. At last you taught me that whatever I drank was Tirtha itself. Thus having absorbed me into your imperishable Being, you totally quenched my thirst for it.

(vi) *Ashana* (Eating)

Beginningless and endless Papa! When I was a child I ate tasteful food, of which I relished sweets the most. I partook with faith and devotion the food offered to the deities in temples and also the Prasad of Srimat Pandurangashram Swami, Sri Tammanna Sastri, Srimat Anandashram Swami, Sri Siddharudha Swami and Sri Chandekar Maharaj.

O kindness-incarnate Papa! Then at last by your will I came to you and ate your Prasad with great zest and craved more and more for it without being appeased. Seeing this you advised me that whatever I ate was Ram's Prasad. In this way, attuning my life with your immortal radiance, you cast off my covetousness for Prasad.

(vii) *Seva* (Service)

O infinite Papa! In my childhood, you as my mother, father and relatives gave me toys to play with. I used my hands in the play. Then as instructed by them I performed little acts of their service with my hands. At their advice, my hands touched and worshipped the images of God and with the hands I picked flowers for worship. After marriage I engaged my hands in the service of my husband and his elders who were all your manifestations.

O Papa, the lover of devotees! Similarly my hands were used in serving and saluting your embodiments, Srimat Anandashram Swami, Srimat Pandurangashram Swami, Sri Tammanna Sastri, Sri Siddharudha Swami and Sri Chandekar Maharaj.

O compassionate Papa! Thus extending the sphere of my service with my hands you brought me at last into your presence. Here when serving you, you granted me unbounded joy and I was never satisfied however much I used my hands in your service and in saluting you. Then you advised me that whatever work I did with my hands should be taken as Ram's service and worship. You took me then into your all-pervading Being and gave me perfect satisfaction.

(viii) *Asana* (Seat)

O infinite Papa! When I was a small child I rested on the earth which is your lap and then I lay on the lap of my mother, father and friends who are all yourself. Thereafter I sat with all devotion before the deities in temples, so also in front of Srimat Pandurangashram Swami.

O Papa, the lover of the humble! Moreover I sat with devotion and reverence before Srimat Anandashram Swami. I also sat before Sri Tammanna Sastri, Sri Siddharudha Swami, Sri N.V.R.

and Sri Chandekar Maharaj when they were initiating me with the Guru Mantra, thereby causing my reverential attitude to Gurus to grow into an ever-widening circle.

O all-pervading Papa! At last by your unbounded grace you drew me to your presence. Even here when you were giving me the Guru Mantra I sat before you with all humility and respect. But I was not satisfied however long I sat at your feet. Seeing this you advised me that wherever I sat I should consider that I was sitting in the presence of Ram. Granting me this experience you merged me into your immutable Existence giving me thereby complete satisfaction.

(ix) *Chalana* (Movement)

O Papa, the eternal witness! In my girlhood when I was yet small, by your will, I enjoyed running about on my legs. Next I walked hither and thither for doing little acts of service of my mother and father. Besides, for the worship of the deity in the temple at home I moved about picking Tulsi and flowers. I performed Pradakshina of the temples I visited. As willed by you I wended my way to where Srimat Pandurangashram Swami sat, who was verily your own Self. After I joined my husband's household you prompted me to move about in the service of my husband and his elders in the family.

O Papa, the lover of the humble! I walked hither and thither, in and out, to serve you in the form of Srimat Pandurangashram Swami, Srimat Anandashram Swami, Sri Siddharudha Swami and Sri Chandekar Maharaj. Then, O giver of peace to all, you directed my steps to your presence. Here however much I engaged myself in your service involving a great deal of running about here and there, I never felt tired. I did Pradakshina of you many times, yet I was not satisfied. In the end you taught me that wherever I moved about it was Pradakshina of God, and then you absorbed me in your eternal Being granting me peace and contentment.

CHAPTER THREE

Bereavement

O INFINITE PAPA! IN MY TWENTIETH year my husband passed away with the result that at first for some time my mind became blank. Then my grief was unbearable. A feeling of destitution seized me and I was utterly miserable. Even a year prior to my husband's decease you willed through my husband that I should take a vow of perfect chastity. After his death the fear of any lapse in this vow tormented me.

O gracious Papa! I had heard people say that if a wife died within one year of her husband's demise, she should be considered as having died in the lifetime of her husband. Therefore I thought of putting an end to my life within one year of my husband's death so that I could fulfil this condition and keep up my vow of chastity. As I was, from the beginning, afraid of drowning in water or death by fire I decided upon terminating my life by swallowing opium.

O Papa, the protector of the humble! In Malsiras, where I lived at the time, many people were addicted to opium eating. Without anybody's knowledge I collected opium, procuring it from different servants for two or four annas each time and that too, once in about eight or ten days.

O all-pervading Papa! The last day of the year of my husband's death was fast approaching. It so happened now that I had to pay a visit to Pandharpur where I had often been going on pilgrimage. This time when I was there I stood before the deity in the temple, Vithal, who is none other than yourself, and prayed: "God, grant me death soon without involving anybody in trouble on account of it." Next I approached the image of Rukmini who is also yourself, and prayed: "Goddess, the responsibility of taking care of my sons, Ganesh and Narayan, rests with you. Further, their future progress and prosperity in all manner of ways depends on you only." I then returned to Malsiras.

O compassionate Papa! I resolved to swallow opium in the night. My habit was to sleep between Ganesh and Narayan on the floor. That night I did not sleep there. Instead I placed two pillows covering them with a cloth where I used to sleep, and after taking opium laid myself down a little away from them on the bare floor. Prior to my doing so I wrote a letter stating that I died by a snake-bite, and kept the note under my pillow. Besides, I had placed the photo of Sri Siddharudha Swami near the spot where I rested my head.

O kindness-incarnate Papa! Whenever I started any kind of work, I used to apprise it to all the photos of saints and pictures of deities. As usual, that night also I had prayed in front of them. The last of them was the picture of Samarth Ramdas. Although the quantity of opium I had swallowed that night was more than enough to produce the desired result, I could not get sleep. When I was restless for getting sleep I saw at my head Samarth Ramdas himself walking to and fro. I was delighted to behold him, having the desire still in me to die. I gazed at him by raising my head. He was moving about for fifteen minutes.

Ganesh, who would not normally be disturbed at night in his sleep, suddenly woke up and calling my mother-in-law Anasuyakka, asked: "Where has my mother gone?" The result was the instant disappearance of Samarth Ramdas. The noise and enquiry that ensued brought to light the fact that I had taken opium. Now my brother-in-law, the elder brother of my husband, Doctor Rama Rao, administered to me an emetic and saved me from the hands of death.

CHAPTER FOUR

Sri Siddharudha Swami and Deities

O COMPASSIONATE PAPA! SEEING the photo of Sri Siddharudha Swami placed near my pillow, Dr. Rama Rao thought that I had developed great faith in Sri Siddharudha Swami and so he sent me and my three-year old child Narayan with his mother, Anasuyakka, to the Ashram of Sri Siddharudha Swami at Hubli. We reached the Ashram and had Darshan of the Swami. Anasuyakka explained to the Swami all about me and he asked me to stay there for four months. Then Anasuyakka went to her third son's place. During my stay in the Ashram I lost all caste and food distinctions. I spent most of that period blissfully like a child. However, sometimes I would suffer pangs of grief at the thought of my husband's demise and the consequent separation from him. All these events were brought about by you alone without my knowledge.

In order that I might be relieved from this grief and attain peace, Sri Chandragiri Shiva Rao's wife, with whom I resided in the Ashram, took me to Sri Siddharudha Swami. While I was yet fifty feet distant from the Swami's room I heard a voice: "As you wish, you will obtain a Saraswat Guru and you will realize peace." The voice was like that of Sri Siddharudha Swami. Therefore I returned from there without opening my agonised heart before him. On the lapse of some days, Anasuyakka came and on her initiative I requested the Swami to initiate me and he gave me the five-lettered Mantra: नमः शिवाय (Namah Sivaya). A few days later after the Sivaratri celebrations, Anasuyakka escorted me back to Dr. Rama Rao's house in Malsiras.

In our house in Malsiras there were pictures of Rama, Sita, Krishna, Shiva and other deities. It was my routine to worship them with devotion and bow before them. After my husband's demise I had given up all religious practices out of sorrow as well as anger. Even when I took to these observances later it was only to satisfy my elders in the house. I restarted them on return from the Math of Sri Siddharudha Swami. For the spiritual welfare of the departed souls in the family as also for the sake of Ganesh and Narayan, I began reciting 1,300 times a day the thirteen-lettered Mantra and 500 times the five-lettered Mantra. At this juncture whatever thoughts arose in my mind I had the feeling that you, who are all-pervading, were conversing with me through all the pictures and deities and saints.

Now you exhorted me through these pictures, 'Recite the Mantras for your own sake.' I disagreed to do this and replied: 'I cannot do the Japa for my sake.' The deities in the pictures reiterated: 'You ought to repeat the Mantra for your sake only.' But I did not approve of the advice and for some days I carried on a controversy with you in the deities. Finally, finding that I insisted upon doing the Japa for your sake, you as deities in the pictures consented. Thenceforward, besides these repetitions of the Mantras for the departed souls in the family, I also did daily Japa 15,000 times of the thirteen-lettered Mantra and offered it to the deities in the pictures with water and Tulsi leaves.

In this manner I continued to dedicate the Japa daily to the deities. When I was doing this as usual, one day, however much I tried to make the offering to the deities with water and Tulsi, I could not do so as my hands would not move. At once I turned to the deities and asked: 'Why have you done this?' Then yourself in the deities replied: 'In future you should do the Japa only for your sake.' Opposing your injunction I said: 'This is impossible; I will never do Japa for my sake.' But you did not agree. At last I told you: 'I will not beg of you anything for myself. Give me whatever *you* like.' Then my hands moved and I surrendered up the Japa to you. Thus I made over the Japa to you until the count reached two crores.

CHAPTER FIVE

Sri Chandekar Maharaj

WHILE I WAS PASSING DAYS AS related above, one day you in the form of a great soul, Sri Chandekar Maharaj, paid a visit to Malsiras where I lived. The Maharaj was an inspiring exponent of the scripture, *Jnaneshwari* and was granting great peace to his listeners. Dr. Rama Rao invited the saint to our house to discourse upon *Jnaneshwari* so that I might have peace of mind. Later, when we had shifted to Sirsi to which place Dr. Rama Rao was transferred, he paid us a visit there also. He related to us about a rosary which was presented to him by his Guru. As we were keenly interested in listening to the details about the rosary he told us how he got it. In this context he narrated in brief his life-story which runs as follows:

Sri Chandekar Maharaj in his earlier life was a merchant. He married the daughter of his maternal uncle who set him up in business in one of his shops. They engaged a paid servant to look after the shop, while they got immersed in worldly pleasures and enjoyed travelling life as they liked. Now the happy day arrived when God's grace descended on them. When they were lounging comfortably on their easy chairs in the front yard of their shop, a strange woman appeared on the scene. She showed them a packet of jaggery she had purchased from their shop and complained: "Since this jaggery is not of good quality and is costly I don't want it." The servant without saying a word returned its price to her and taking back the jaggery put it in the storing tin and threw away the paper in which it was packed into the front yard. Observing this the Maharaj thought: "It would have been well if the woman were given either jaggery of good quality or the inferior one at a lower price."

At this psychological moment, as it were, a party of devotees passed in front of the shop on their way to Pandharpur, singing God's names. The devotees were so absorbed in their devotions that they were proceeding, singing loudly and dancing, without caring for the mockery and criticism from the public. The Maharaj who was then bereft of any faith in God was thinking within himself, "Have these people gone crazy? What makes them shout and behave unseemly in the streets?" Reflecting thus he raised both his hands aloft and turned them behind touching the back of the chair. Now the piece of paper in which the jaggery was packed for the woman who bought it and which the shop assistant had flung away, had got stuck to the top of the easy chair on which the Maharaj sat. This piece of paper came into his hands. He opened the crumpled paper and found written on it a song composed by Saint Tukaram. The purport of the song was that if any one repeated six crores times the divine Mantra *Ram Krishna Hari*, the person would assuredly be blessed with the vision of God.

Instantly the Maharaj was fired with a keen desire to test and discover how far the promise held out by Saint Tukaram could be true. The result was that the Maharaj went to his shop that night, spilt all the oil stored in tins on the articles kept for sale in the shop and setting fire to them returned home. When the news of the fire spread all over the place, the Maharaj pretending not to know anything about it came on the scene and expressed astonishment. That night itself, removing the gold bangles from his wife's hands when she was asleep, and taking with him also the book *Jnaneshwari*, the Maharaj left the house.

Travelling over many places he at last reached Rishikesh on the Himalayas. There he passed his days in reading *Jnaneshwari* and doing the Japa of *Ṛam Krishna Hari*. Many Mahatmas lived in the Himalayas. Among them one Mahatma used to go to the Maharaj and discourse with him on spiritual matters. But the Maharaj evinced no interest in his talks. So whenever the Mahatma started speaking, the Maharaj would close his ears with both hands and tell him: "I don't need your teaching; I don't believe in what you say. I believe only in what I have gained by experience." Yet the Mahatma would visit him daily without fail. Thus one year passed.

The Maharaj now wished to go back to his native place. On the day prior to his departure from Rishikesh the Mahatma who was coming to the Maharaj daily, forcibly put round the neck of the Maharaj the rosary which he was using and, embracing him tight, whispered in his ears a Mantra. As the Maharaj was struggling to free himself from the clutches of the Mahatma, he could not make out or remember the Mantra poured into his ears. So he did not do the Japa of the Mantra at all, whereas he took great care of the rosary given to him. In due course, the Maharaj returned to his native town.

Here the Maharaj's wife, owing to the pangs of separation from her husband, was bed-ridden with illness. On hearing of her husband's arrival she instantly sent a letter to him in which she wrote that as she was soon to die, she looked forward very anxiously to his Darshan. In reply, the Maharaj informed her that he had vowed to finish a fixed number of Japa of *Ram Krishna Hari* and if he met her before the completion of the Japa, he would have to start it over again. He asked her what her answer to this was. His wife, his true life-partner as she was, sent word to him: "I have however to depart this life, so there is no need to break your vow for my sake." Thus she did not go counter to her husband's will and calmly passed away after the Maharaj regained the Himalayas.

By the time Sri Chandekar Maharaj returned to the Himalayas, the Mahatma who initiated him with the Mantra had renounced his body. Consequently he developed greater reverence to the rosary presented to him by the Mahatma. Thenceforth the Maharaj considered him as his Guru, and placing the rosary given by him in front of him, he would do the Japa with his own rosary.

In due course, the Maharaj paid a visit to Benares. There he went for the Darshan of Kashi Vishwanath and placing the rosary given by his Guru on Shiva's Murti he performed his usual Japa. On finishing the Japa he left the place forgetting to take the rosary with which he had adorned the Shiva Linga. Having reached his quarters he remembered the rosary and was greatly upset. He became all the more anxious when he thought that it would be difficult to recover it as the daily worshippers would have adorned the Shiva Linga with Bilva leaves and flowers. The Maharaj therefore felt that he was like a beggar by losing such an invaluable jewel. Immediately he ran to the temple of Vishwanath and searched for the missing rosary, but having not found it anywhere in spite of a long search he was stricken with despair. However, he discovered it at last by the side of Shiva's Murti. His joy knew no bounds. Till then the Maharaj was under the impression that he had no love for his Guru, but when he saw how deeply he was affected by the loss of the rosary given by the Guru it was proved that after all he had genuine love for his Guru.

O all-pervading Papa! On hearing the story of Sri Chandekar Maharaj's life a desire sprang up in me to have this Japa-mala.

I made him aware of this through Anasuyakka, but at the time the rosary was not with him. He assured me that the rosary would be given to me when I met him at Paithan where he would go for Ekanath Shasti. I went to Paithan with Anasuyakka and thence we proceeded to a place called Nevas.

O gracious Papa! At Nevas stands a granite pillar on which Saint Jnaneshwar wrote with charcoal his famous commentary on *Bhagavad Gita*—the *Jnaneshwari*. His disciples who were with him would copy out the script on the pillar, chapter after chapter, as Jnaneshwar Maharaj went on writing. The last chapter the saint wrote on the pillar was carved on it and it is still there. When I went there with Anasuyakka we met the Maharaj who handed over to me the rosary which his Guru gave him.

O infinite Papa! Sri Chandekar Maharaj did not initiate anyone with a Mantra. Those who wished for initiation took the Mantra when he was singing it during his discourses on the *Jnaneshwari*. In this way I got the Mantra *Ram Krishna Hari* from him and as willed by you I began reading the *Jnaneshwari* and *Ekanath Bhagavat*. I performed the Japa of the Mantra with the rosary after bath for the welfare of all members of my family and for the preservation of my physical purity. At other times I would wear the rosary round my neck.

O kindness-incarnate Papa! Although I received Mantras severally from Sri Tammanna Sastri, Sri Siddharudha Swami and Sri Chandekar Maharaj, every time I was newly initiated you gave me the belief that all Gurus are one and the same. When I did not have this faith I prayed to the earlier Gurus to grant me this faith and attitude. In the end this conviction became firmly fixed. It was only then that I would ask and receive the Mantra from other saints.

CHAPTER SIX

Who is My Saviour?

O PAPA! THE DIVINE MOTHER! In Sirsi where I lived in the house of Dr. Rama Rao, there was a devotee who had received initiation from Srimat Pandurangashram Swami. His name in initials is Sri N.V.R. He was a married man and lived the life of a householder as commanded by his Guru. He was held in high reverence by all people in Sirsi. Being acquainted with us he was coming to our house now and then. Once Anasuyakka requested him to initiate her with the Guru-Mantra in the same way as Srimat Pandurangashram Swami initiated him. He agreed and a day was fixed for the rite.

When the appointed day arrived, Anasuyakka arranged two seats in the shrine-room—one for him and the other for herself—and waited his coming. As I wished to be present at the initiation, with their permission I stood in the room. In fact, I had for a long time a very keen longing to be initiated by both Srimat Pandurangashram Swami and Srimat Anandashram Swami. In fulfilment of this ardent desire Sri N.V.R. when he came into the room, asked Anasuyakka if he could initiate me instead of her, as he noticed that I had more concentration than she. On Anasuyakka's agreeing, I was asked to sit on the Asan prepared for her. Now Sri N.V.R. explained to me in detail about the initiation of Ajapa Japa he had from the Swami of Chitrapur Math and then initiated me.

O compassionate Papa! Since you are Sri N.V.R. playing as a householder, I feared that I might again be caught up in the worldly life. So in a day or two I abandoned the repetition of this new Mantra.

O all-pervading Papa! It so happened that Ganesh fell down twice and broke his wrist. Thinking this might be due to the evil influence of planets, Anasuyakka went to an old priest of a nearby temple of Subramanya, taking with her the book containing all the horoscopes of the family, with a view to get Ganesh's horoscope examined by him. He said it was all due to a malefic planet in his horoscope.

O Papa, the storehouse of compassion! It was my custom during the period of every Ram Navami festival which lasted for seven days, to read the *Tulsidas Ramayana*, *Bhavartha Ramayana* or *Ananda Ramayana*. In the midst of reading these sacred books I would open at random the book I was reading and, after a prayer to God, look into it to find out the good and bad in store for me in my future life. To my painful surprise I would every time light upon the passages in *Ramayana* describing the forcible kidnapping of Sita by Ravana, and how the demonesses who guarded her would frighten her and lastly how Hanuman reached Lanka and stood before Sita. I was afraid that any such incident might happen in my future life. So with the curiosity to find out what my horoscope predicted in this matter, I went to the temple priest when he was alone. I made him aware of my fears and asked him to keep the matter confidential. He agreed to read my horoscope when I went to him next day.

On the night I returned from the priest I dreamt a dream in which I saw a serpent pursuing me with its hood raised. Terrified thoroughly, I started running away from it, but wherever I went I found the serpent close at my heels. At last I climbed the compound wall and jumped down on the other side of it. Instantly I awoke from the dream. Although this was a mere dream, after waking I felt pain all over the body. Filled with fear, on the very next day I went in great haste to the priest and recounted to him my dream in all its details. I anxiously asked him what would be the consequences of the dream. I also asked him to read my horoscope and tell me what it predicted about my future. In response, he at first said: "Even if we desire to have such dreams we don't get them. The serpent that you saw is none other than Subramanya who is worshipped in the temple and he has favoured you with his Darshan." Then he scrutinised my horoscope and declared that it would be extremely difficult for me to preserve my chastity. The moment I heard these words I felt as if lightning coursed through my body. The priest could not say how I would be able to escape this danger. I questioned him if it was not possible to avoid this perilous contingency by the Japa of all the Mantras I received from four saints, whom I looked upon as one Guru, and by performing their service. His answer spelt nothing but despair. Seeing no way to protect my physical purity I gave up all hope.

O kindness-incarnate Papa! Understanding the agony of my heart the priest, who is yourself, gave me assurance in these words: "If you obtain a Guru who is a Jeevanmukta and who will lift you up to his own exalted state you shall triumph over this impending fate." But who is such a Jeevanmukta Guru? What are his characteristics? Where can I find him? These questions racked my mind one upon another. I addressed mentally the Gurus who had previously initiated me: "Believing you all to be Jeevanmuktas I sought initiation from you. If, as the priest says, you are not ordained to save me from this peril and grant me the supreme liberation, please do search out for me a befitting Guru and confer on me also the firm conviction that all of you saints are one and the same in different forms." In this manner I prayed to you in all humility day and night with tears in my eyes.

CHAPTER SEVEN

I Meet Papa

O OMNIPRESENT PAPA! IN RESPONSE to my humble appeal you paved the way for my coming to Kasaragod. You induced Dr. Rama Rao to decide upon a trip to foreign countries for higher studies and practice of surgery. Dr. Rama Rao and his wife Sundari loved me and took care of me so much that I and my children were to them like their own children. Their aim was to make me ever happy. As the doctor planned to leave India for Europe he left his house at Sirsi. Both the doctor and Sundari told me that, in the circumstances, I could go to reside in any place I chose. I expressed my wish to stay with Sundari at her father's house in Kasaragod. They agreed and in their company I came to Kasaragod on 7th June 1928.

O infinite Papa! The people at Sundari's parental house were visiting frequently your Ashram which was opened on 3rd June 1928. From the time they saw you, one and all of them in the house were talking highly of your spiritual attainments and qualities. This they did with great affection and enthusiasm. As Dr. Rama Rao was a constant reader of *Jnaneshwari* he knew to some extent the principal qualities of a saint. Whenever he was told by his mother about any saint she had met, he would plainly say that the saint did not possess the signs described in the *Jnaneshwari*. But after seeing you, he said that he discovered in you all the characteristics of a saint as described in the *Jnaneshwari*. When I heard so much in your praise I desired to have your Darshan. Moreover, Sundari was pressing me daily to accompany her to the Ashram. Since my feeling to see you grew more and more in intensity as time passed, a hazy notion developed in me that if I once went out of the house I might not return to it. So I hesitated to pay you a visit. At last, with a view only to see you and come back, I started to go to your Ashram escorted by the people of the house in which I lived.

O mother Papa! As I neared your Ashram I experienced a rare and inexpressible joy similar to what a child would feel when it was about to meet its mother after a long period of separation. Thenceforward, I began visiting the Ashram for your Darshan daily in the company of friends.

O all-pervading Papa! The sublimity of your presence is simply indescribable. The moment I saw you, the passions that were vexing me disappeared and bliss established itself in my heart. At home I was never contented however long I talked about you to the people therein. I was feeling a peculiar joy in relating your talks to all I met. Your very remembrance made my hair stand on end and my joy overflow.

O Papa, who is full of compassion! On the lapse of about a year in this manner, the occasion arrived for us to go to Dwarwar to attend the marriage of Anasuyakka's younger brother's daughter. There I had once more Darshan of Sri Chandekar Maharaj. When Anasuyakka met the Maharaj in the past he had told her that as there was in me excessive Tamas it would not be possible for me to realize God. In those days I hesitated to converse with him, but this time I talked to him familiarly about you. Seeing this he remarked in a tone of surprise: "Who is that Swami Ramdas who has raised you to Sattwa and brought about such a marvellous change in you? He seems, indeed, to be an extraordinary personage. Some day I must also have his Darshan."

O kindness-incarnate Papa! From Dharwar I went to Hubli for the Darshan of Sri Siddharudha Swami who was then laid up with illness. On return to Dharwar my condition was like that of a hungry child crying for its mother. The separation from you for some time created in me a keen longing to see you again. However, without much delay, you brought me back to Kasaragod. When I joined your presence on this occasion, I engaged myself in your service with a greater zeal than before. Soon after, I completed two crores of my Japa.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Initiation

O PURUSHOTTAMA PAPA! FROM childhood I had cherished great love for God. I very much liked to stand before the pictures of God in my house for singing to them praises and invocations. I would fix my eyes on those pictures and would so far get absorbed that I used to forget my kith and kin and surroundings.

O compassionate Papa! It was my practice to join my hands in the salute of the pictures of God. Whenever I passed the door of the family shrine I would not fail to salute the deity inside it. Whenever I went out, on seeing stones on which Kumkum was applied, I would offer salutations to them. Noticing this people would laugh at me.

O love-incarnate Papa! When I stood before the pictures of God I would talk to them. Sometimes, even though I was not in front of them, I would converse with them, visualising them face to face.

O Papa, the divine Mother! I took delight in touching the pictures of God, but I was not allowed to touch the images which were daily bathed and worshipped, except on special occasions. The daily worship of the images in the home shrine was performed by a Saraswat priest appointed for the task. On festival days we, children, were permitted to worship the images. On such occasions I would experience untold joy in touching, worshipping and saluting them with all faith. All this was done only after first purifying myself by ablutions and bath.

O Papa who is beginningless and endless! From my childhood you made me possess a reverential feeling for God. It was my habit to apply Kumkum to the pictures of God in our houses every day. It was not possible to apply Kumkum at once to all the pictures. So when I was about to apply Kumkum to any one picture, the other pictures would ask me, "Why don't you apply Kumkum to me first?" Therefore, I used to apply Kumkum to one of the pictures, telling the others, "I will apply Kumkum to you first tomorrow." Sometimes I would forget to which of the pictures I applied Kumkum first the previous day; then I would say to all the pictures, "I do not remember to which picture I applied Kumkum first yesterday. Therefore, no one among you should get annoyed with me." And then I would apply the Kumkum.

O Papa, who is all and beyond all! As I outgrew my childhood, you infused into me the desire to learn by heart hymns glorifying God. When I was yet five or six years old, you induced me to wish for initiation of Guru Mantra from the traditional Guru, Srimat Pandurangashram Swami. The Swami was giving the Mantra only to married couples. The Swami, who was none other than yourself, was therefore not in a position to initiate me as I was then unmarried, and hence my wish remained unfulfilled.

O all-pervading Papa! After marriage I wanted to receive the Mantra from Srimat Anandashram Swami, disciple of Srimat Pandurangashram Swami. But my husband, as you willed, prevented me from satisfying this longing of mine. Yet my aspiration to be initiated with the Mantra grew more and more strong as time passed. At last in my eighteenth year at Hubli I took from Sri Tammanna Sastri, a disciple of Sri Gondavali Maharaj, initiation of the thirteen-lettered Mantra: **श्री राम जय**

राम जय जय राम (Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram). He instructed me to say this Mantra at least 1,300 times a day. He further said that if this was not possible I should turn the rosary once a day with repetition of the Mantra. By your grace I did the Japa of this Mantra the required number of times without fail.

O Papa, the giver of bliss! Thus infusing into my mind the spirit of love and devotion for God, you guided me to yourself and initiating me with the holy Ram Mantra: "Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram," set me to repeat it day and night. Moreover you asked me to consider all thoughts that arose in my mind and whomsoever I beheld as Ram himself.

O Papa, the repository of compassion! While in this way I was practising that you were all in all, I came to realize that you were ever near me and that you were ever dwelling in my heart. The feeling of your nearness filled me with infinite love for you, resulting in my mergence into your limitless Being, thereby awakening me to the knowledge that you and I were one.

O Papa, the lover of the humble! You explained to me how to offer you all the actions performed by the limbs of my body and the senses. You thereby made me realize my oneness with all aspects of your eternal Being. Do make me write clearly about my integral surrender to you from my childhood—my body, mind and all that I possessed—and also how you instilled in me the qualities of renunciation, compassion, forgiveness and peace.

O Papa, the ocean of kindness! In my childhood I loved my mother and father without recognising them. When I grew up I learned to love them knowing who they were. The love I bore for my parents led me to love my brothers and sisters. This love for parents, brothers and sisters prepared me to sacrifice my all for them. Though sometimes I got angry with my brothers and sisters you made me treat them with compassion, kindness, forgiveness and affection because of my love for them. When I was at school for my education I used to be there both physically and mentally by lessening, for the time being, my attachment to relatives at home. After marriage, making my love for my husband a basis, I loved his parents and relatives. Then I withdrew my love from my parents and erstwhile relatives and tried to love my husband and his people with all my heart, ever ready to sacrifice my all for them.

At the age of twenty-five you awakened in my heart an intense longing for a Guru and you brought me to where you lived. Accepting you as my central object of adoration, I learnt to love the entire universe. I was prepared to extend my love towards all beings and treat them with kindness, patience and forgiveness. As my vision expanded I came to love all people and creatures in the world, and my attachment for my husband and other members of his family disappeared. But later when I renounced my attachment for all my kith and kin, by your will, I dedicated my body, mind and all that I called my own, to you who is all and beyond all. Ultimately you made me renounce myself, your form and the entire cosmos and I became one with the eternal Truth beyond name, form and movement. This spiritual summit I reached through your infinite grace.

My infinite Papa! You brought about all these changes in my inner being while all my external limbs and aspects remained as before. In order that I might realize your real existence, that is the Self, you blessed me from my childhood with the urge to dedicate to you my entire body, mind and possessions and also you illumined my heart with love, compassion and forgiveness. You have, no doubt, gifted all beings in the creation with this nature and capability—principally human beings in a larger measure. Nevertheless, for the smooth running of your creative activities in the world the majority of human beings, instead of using these divine faculties for realizing your supreme and eternal existence, are busy in employing them for attaining transitory happiness. This is undoubtedly your own doing. Because of this many have not achieved permanent peace and bliss. For experiencing this exalted state it is essential to know you in reality. So I pray to you, who are Purushottama, to condescend to shower your grace on all beings so that an intense aspiration springs in their hearts for their absorption into your imperishable life and existence, finally granting them realization of everlasting peace and bliss.

CHAPTER NINE

Spiritual Light

O PAPA, GIVER OF BLISS! ONE day you asked me to sing devotional songs. But I did not know how to sing. So you yourself taught me to sing some inspiring songs. The songs you taught me are:

ॐ

तूं माझा यजमान रामा ।
जननी जठरीं रक्षियलें मज । पोसुनि पंचहि प्राण ॥
बाहेर निघतां मातेचे स्तनिं । पय केलें निर्माण ॥
ऐसे असतां या पोटाची । कां करुं चिंताजाण ॥
मध्वमुनीश्वर स्वामि रमापति । धरिं माझा अभिमान ॥

O Ram, you are my master. By feeding my five vital airs you protected me in my mother's womb.

When I came out of it you provided me with milk in my mother's breasts.

While this is the case, why should I worry about food for my stomach?

Madhva Munishwar Swami Ramapati says: O God, I surrender my I-ness to you.

ॐ

धन्य तोचि जगीं एक हरिरंगीं नाचे ।
रामकृष्ण वासुदेव सदा स्मरे वाचे ॥

सुख दुःख समान सकळ जीवांचा कृपाळ ।
ज्ञानाचा उद्बोध भक्तिप्रेमाचा कल्लोळ ॥
विषयीं विरक्त जया नाहीं आपपर ।
संतुष्ट सर्वदा स्वयें व्यापक निर्धार ॥
जाणीव शाहणीव ओझें सांडुनियां दूरी ।
आपण वस्तीकर वर्ततसे संसारीं ॥
एका जनार्दनीं नित्य हरीचें कीर्तन ।
आसनीं शयनीं सदा हरीचें चिंतन ॥

Blessed indeed is he on this earth who dances in God-intoxication and sings always "Rama Krishna Vasudeva".

To him joy and grief are same and he pours compassion on all living beings.

He is an embodiment of wisdom, an ocean of devotion and love.

He is free from sense desires and has no distinction between "I" and "others".

He is ever contented, being firmly aware of his pervasiveness.

He has thrown far away the burden of knowledge and ignorance—all the while he lives and moves in the world.

Janardan Eka says: "Such a one sings always of God.

"While sitting or lying down, his mind is always filled with God-remembrance."

ॐ

सद्गुरु वांचोनि सांपडेना सोय ।
धरावे ते पाय आदी आदी ॥
आपणासारिखे करिती तात्काळ ।

नाहीं काळवेळ तया लागी ॥
लोह परिसाची न साहे उपमा ।
सद्गुरु महिमा अगाध ची ॥
तुका म्हणे कैसे आंधळे हे जन ।
गेले बिसरोन खऱ्या देवा ॥

Without a Guru you have no relief, so in the first place hold on to his feet.
Then he will at once make you like himself for which he won't take any time.
The simile of philosophers' stone and iron does not apply here.
The power of Sadguru is truly unfathomable.
Tukaram says: "How blind people are! They have forgotten true God."

ॐ

गुरुकृपा-अंजन पायो मेरे भाई ।
रामबिना कछु देखत नाहीं ॥
अंदर राम बाहिर राम ।
जहांदेखे वहां रामहि राम ॥
जागत राम सोवत राम ।
सपनोमे देखत राजा राम ॥
कहत कबीरा अनुभव निका ।
जहां देखे वहां राम सरिखा ॥

O my brother! Have in your eyes the collyrium of Guru's grace.
Then you will know none but Rama.
Inside Rama, outside Rama, wherever you turn there you see Rama.

In walking you see Rama, in sleep you see Rama, also in dream you behold Raja Rama.

Kabir says: "Listen, O brother sadhu! Obtain this sublime vision. Then you will behold Rama wherever your eye turns.

O compassionate Papa! After you taught me these songs I learnt many others. When asked to sing I would do so thereafter without any hesitation.

O infinite Papa! It was my nature to weep whenever I was pained at heart and to beat severely my children if they turned naughty and did not obey me. Anasuyakka's sister being unable to put up with this behaviour of mine, complained to you about it.

O compassionate Papa! You then advised me in these words: "If you have real love for Ramdas you should not beat your children in future. Know this, when you beat them you are really beating Ramdas himself." You further instructed me: "From now onwards give up reading the scriptures—*Ekanath Bhagavat* and *Jnaneshwari* Stop your daily worship and also the use of rosary for Japa. These religious practices are gone through with the object of loving all beings and creatures alike. In spite of your observing this routine you are not able to control and give up anger. Then what is the use of it all? Therefore, in future keep only Ramnam on your tongue and regard everybody as Ram and the service you render to anybody as the service and worship of Ram."

O Papa, the lover of devotees! From the day you gave me the advice my mind became light and I got some peace of mind, but since I had not completed my stipulated Japa with the rosary for the sake of the children and the departed souls and since the great liking for reading scriptures was still there, my mind used to be now and again drawn towards them. I wished at least to touch the religious books and salute them. However, by a stern control of mind I tried to escape from their hold on me.

O omnipresent Papa! Finding out the workings of my mind, one day you told a devotee: "Without oneself having attained liberation if one strives to liberate others, it will be like a blind man offering to guide another blind man with the consequence that both of them fall into the pit." Though the advice was intended for others, it deeply affected me and I curbed my thoughts from rushing towards the scriptures and Japa for the sake of children and departed souls. At last I was able to root out my attraction for them.

CHAPTER TEN

Persecution and Crucial Tests

O PAPA, THE PROTECTOR OF YOUR devotees! During this time one day Srimat Anandashram Swami happened to come to Kasaragod. Getting the information of the Swami's arrival, you came to Kasaragod in the form of G.S. along with a companion.

O Papa, the lover of the humble! When Dr. Rama Rao was living in Sirsi, G.S. had visited his house for the eye operation of his mother. Since G.S. was acquainted with Dr. Rama Rao and Sundari he was put up at theirs in Kasaragod on this occasion as well. He was posing himself not only as a devotee of Gandhiji but also of Srimat Anandashram Swami. He told us that he was following the Swami wherever he went. When the Swami had visited Sirsi he was there also.

O compassionate Papa! It was not the custom for the Swami to give Tirtha to widows. So we, four or five widows, were very unhappy on this account. But G.S. somehow managed to get us Tirtha from the Swami's hand. Therefore, all of us held G.S. in high reverence. He was telling us often many incidents relating to the greatness of the Swami. To listen to these talks I used to join others in the house.

O love-incarnate Papa! This was all your way to test me. I found out that G.S. was after all a wolf in sheep's skin. As days passed, he started to persecute me, going even to the extent of exerting force on me in the house. By this I was not only extremely pained but was also seized with the fear how I could safeguard my chastity.

O universal Papa! I had believed till then that I.could preserve my chastity by living in a house, but after what happened as related above, I gave up the notion, "the house is mine." Since you were mine I considered the entire universe was mine. Should you intend to ruin me through any form you assumed, I would not mind even if it occurred when I was cast into the streets. When I made up my mind like this, G.S. could no longer trouble me. So my blind confidence that a woman living in the house could protect her virtue and chastity received a rude shock and was so totally shattered that my confidence was pulled out, as it were, from it very roots.

O kind-hearted Papa! Then I began to visit your Ashram whenever I liked. Having come to know of this either Sundari or Rame used to send with me some eatables for you. Once it so happened that I could not get any eatables to take with me and I did not want to go to you empty handed. So I bought a loaf of bread from a shop and took it with me. Sundari, who came to know of it, paid the price of the loaf to the shopkeeper.

O Papa, the divine Mother! Once Sundari had no money. So I opened a credit account in the shop and bought bread from there, but the shopkeeper was daily asking for his money whenever I passed by his shop. Since I had no money to pay him I tried to remove from my hands the gold bangles which I was wearing, but as it was not possible to remove them easily I pulled them out by beating them loose. I offered them to the shopkeeper in payment of the dues. Then he cast his looks round about him and discovering a man watching what I was doing, he refused to accept the bangles. Coming home I handed the bangles over to Sundari. Sundari procuring from somebody the needed amount, gave it to me and I paid off the debt.

O loving Papa! Once when I was in the Ashram I saw a helpless woman wearing a tattered piece of cloth for lack of a sari. She asked me in all humility for a sari. How could I obtain a sari there? Since I did not need a sari of eighteen cubits which I then wore, I went beneath a tree and tearing it into two pieces gave one piece to the woman. When I returned home Sundari questioned me why my sari had become short in length. I explained to her the reason and she immediately bought a new sari and gave it to me. I wore this sari of eighteen cubits only for a few days. Another woman begged of me for a sari and in this case as well I divided my sari into two parts and gave one piece to the woman. As usual, when I came back home Sundari noticed again that I wore only a cut piece of a sari. Sundari then asked me if I needed any more a sari of eighteen cubits. I replied that if I had a sari of that length I would not be able to resist giving a piece of it to any other needy woman. Thenceforward I have been using only saris eleven cubits long.

O compassionate Papa! With the object of making me your own in all respects, you tested me in various ways ending with a crucial test as to how far I had attachment for garments and gold. Your Lila is wonderful!

O Papa, the lover of the devotees! Sometimes while I was going to you in the Ashram I would return home half way remembering Ganesh, Narayan, Sundari and her children; then when I again thought of you I would restart and proceed towards the Ashram. In this way I would retrace my steps at every second furlong and then go forward. Noticing me doing this the people came to believe that I had gone off my head. Hearing this state of things about me Anasuyakka came to me in great haste and tendered advice to me in all possible ways. Truly, Papa, you did not turn me mad after the transitory worldly pleasures but kept alive in me the insistent longing for eternal happiness. Anasuyakka warned me that I should not go alone to the Ashram, stressing the point that this advice came to me from Ram himself, as the fact is that everyone is Ram. Thenceforth, I was not going to the Ashram without a companion.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Equal Vision

O PAPA, THE OCEAN OF KINDNESS!

When your devotees invited me to talk about you, I went to their houses and joined them also in their domestic work considering it as your service in order to accelerate my spiritual progress. There I used to talk about you and Ramnam.

Among the houses I visited the principal one was that of Rame. Rame had an extraordinary faith in Ramnam and she was repeating it almost all day and night without caring even for her meals. When I observed her condition at that time I was reminded how you were, as related by you, during the first year of your Sadhana. So whenever I met Rame I used to feel as happy as when I was with you. I was not at ease unless I went to Rame's house daily and recounted to her your talks in the Ashram. Rame's mother Rukmabai and mother-in-law Lakshmi Devi had great love for me. I was to them like their child. If Rukmabai fell ill she would like me alone to nurse her. Despite my engagement almost the whole day in your service and also of your other forms, all the while I was engrossed in talking about you alone. Yet my standing fear was not allayed. Consequently my desire to receive initiation of Ramnam from you grew more and more powerful. One day I came to you when you were preparing yourself for rest in the forenoon. You saw me come to you in the hot sun when there was nobody else in the Ashram. You asked me: "Why have you come now?" Immediately on apprising you of my object you initiated me with the holy Mantra: "Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram."

O compassionate Papa! Accepting me as your child, you advised me in these words: "Repeat always Ramnam and consider the service you do of anybody as the service and worship of Ram. This practice will easily enable you to realize your oneness with the universal being, Ram."

O infinite Papa! After you initiated me with the Mantra, my love for your relations grew more than before, so much so that my longing to see and serve them increased. Besides, within a short time of getting the Mantra the feeling arose in me that you were my own. As my love for you enhanced, I began to look upon all beings as my own. Ultimately I came to love all people in the same way as I loved your relatives.

O all-pervading Papa! Whenever I visited the houses of certain devotees to converse with them about you, if I found any fault in persons I met there, I would mentally pray to them looking upon them as yourself to be gracious enough not to make me pick faults in them any more. I would also, in the case of women, when I noticed defects, go to them when asleep and take the dust of their feet and pray to them to prevent me from seeing shortcomings in them. In the case of men, I would drink as Tirtha the water that dripped down on the floor from their legs when they came out of the bath room to go inside the house. This I used to do without their knowledge. If I found this was not possible I would drink as Tirtha the water flowing out of the gutter at the back of the bath room when they were taking bath. At the same time I prayed to them not to make me see faults in them again. By this practice I arrived at a state in which I could not see any fault in anybody.

O omnipresent Papa! When anyone out of love for me made me speak, I feared I would be led away by my admiration for them and thereby cause delay in my realization of your imperishable Being. I was praying from moment to moment to you that you should not permit this to happen.

O all-pervading Papa! I was in the habit of repeatedly praying that by your grace I should not have disgust for your harsh and fearful forms, and attachment to your gentle and pleasing forms, and that you should soon dissolve me into your absolute Being.

O compassionate Papa! In response to my prayer you granted me the feeling that you were my own and all were my own, and also the experience that you were near me, however far you might be. Hence when you went on the North Indian tour my pain of separation from you was very much lessened.

O all-transcendent Papa! Although I was absorbed in your service when you were talking with your devotees, I could listen to all that you said. What you told your devotees used to revolve in my mind and dispel the doubts that harassed me from time to time. At times you were explaining at length what all states you passed through before you finally merged in the eternal being of Godhead. Now I would listen to your discourses intently and reflect within myself as to what all states I had passed through so far, what was my state then and what were the states I had yet to pass through. I then prayed that I should soon get through the states which I had not till then attained.

O universally-immanent Papa! You spoke further to the devotees: "If you think of your past state, your mind would remain behind and so progress onward would not be possible. So give up all thoughts of the past and push forward."

O Papa, the lover of devotees! Sometimes when I was repeating Ramnam I remembered my relatives. I used to be agitated at heart on such occasions. Then you told me: "Since all are manifestations of Ram, don't be upset when you remember your relatives. Take them as Ram himself." You also told me to bring into my mind what all I did from morn to eve, with whom all I talked and what all thoughts arose in my mind. Then if anybody asked me a question I would tell him all that happened from morning till that time. At this the people used to be tired of me and would not at all talk to me. Therefore, I did not go into the past and so it became easy for me to take my mind forward until it was lost in you.

O Papa, the lover of the humble! You spoke: "When the aspiration is strong in your mind for getting realization, that is the time to make an all round effort for it. If that opportunity is not availed of, you will never be sure of attaining Him in this life however hard you may try." So my desire became extremely strong to realize my oneness with the infinite Being as soon as possible.

CHAPTER TWELVE
Serpent Bite

O PAPA, THE OCEAN OF GRACE!

While my aspiration to realize you became exceedingly strong, your devotees living in the North, with a view to draw you to their places, repeated Ramnam in an inordinately increased number. You could not resist their call any longer. So you resolved to travel to the North. Before doing so you thought first to take permission from your Gurudev. Hearing of this I and Rame suffered from the pain of your separation in anticipation. Out of grief we used to beg of you not to go away from Kasaragod to the North. At this time you would discourse for hours upon the impersonal aspect of God. As against it we used to sing before you:

नको ब्रह्मज्ञान आत्मस्थिती भाव ।
मी भक्त तूं देव ऐसें करी ॥

I don't want Brahma Jnana—the knowledge of the Atman.
May I be your devotee and you my God.

O Papa, the mother divine! I desired to spend the night in the Ashram on the day you went to Gurudev for seeking his permission. Coming to know of your intended departure to the North, Rukmabai came to the Ashram. Whenever she visited the Ashram, she would not go back the same day, but spend that night in the Ashram, as it was difficult for her to climb the hill on return, owing to her acute asthmatic trouble. I asked her if I also could stay in the Ashram that night. She did not agree to my proposal. But I did not at all like to leave the Ashram on that day. Moreover, I was keenly anxious to know how you decided about your tour after meeting Gurudev. Therefore, when I started to go home my legs refused to move forward. I sat, without being observed, in a place on the way by which you usually returned so that I might hear your talk about the tour. After a few hours, I saw you coming down the hill talking happily with the friends accompanying you about the permission granted by Gurudev and of your approaching journey.

O Papa, the ocean of grace! Hearing your talk I became miserable and spoke within myself: "It is definite that you are leaving us. Since I have not yet attained the fullness of spiritual life, I wish strongly that I should rather meet with death. At least, you should come to me as a serpent and by biting me free me from the impending pain of separation." After you reached the Ashram I also proceeded towards it. At this juncture, I felt something struck my feet, but without noticing it I walked on. It was a serpent bite. As the poison of the serpent spread upward on my leg, I found it getting heavier as I moved on. Even then, without caring, I dragged myself along with the swollen leg and descended the hill half way. From there I could very well see the Ashram. In the meantime, dark clouds gathered in the sky and rains started, which completely drenched me. I had come to know from some people that the poison of serpent bite does not rise up in the body when a stream of water is poured on the affected part. You brought down rain in time, and thereby prevented the poison from permeating my body.

O universally-pervading Papa! Walking slowly I came to the Ashram. I saw you and others sleeping soundly, and fearing by my remaining there I might disturb you, I did a Pradakshina of the Ashram and again going up the hill laid myself down on the verandah of the small devil's shrine on the top of the hill. I did not get any sleep for a long time owing to the pain from the serpent bite and the thought of your approaching departure. When dawn was nearing I felt drowsy and had a brief nap. At sunrise I got up and for ablutions I slowly made my way, with my swollen leg, to the bank of the river Chandragiri. As the path to the river was difficult I reached the bank as late as 11 a.m. There I finished my bath and returned to the devil's shrine at three in the afternoon and again rested on the verandah.

O all-pervading Papa! People believe that it is harmful for women to sleep in a devil's shrine. Some lads who saw me lying down in the shrine went home and reported to their elders that a woman was found sleeping in the devil's shrine. The elders immediately ran up to you in the Ashram and angrily told you about me. With the object of finding out who it might be, you came along with some devotees to where I was. I then accompanied you to the Ashram. As I had pain in my leg from the serpent bite I walked very slowly. Seeing this, you asked me a little sternly: "Since you desired so much to remain last night in the Ashram how is it you didn't tell Ramdas about it?" Then turning to Rukmabai you asked: "Since she had such a keen longing for spending the night in the Ashram, why did you not give her consent to do so?" Soon you sent me in a horse cart to Rame's house. From there I was taken by Sundari to her home. She arranged to treat me with proper remedies and relieved me from the effects of the poison. Although the wound did not completely heal I began to visit the Ashram as you were soon to go on tour.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Inner Struggle and the Call

O KINDNESS-INCARNATE PAPA! Before you started from the Ashram you gave me the feeling that wherever you happened to be you would be always with me, and so the grief resulting from your separation did not affect me. Rame also joined me in chanting Ramnam as she had great faith in the Mantra.

O Purushottam Papa! When you were in Kasaragod I could not pass even a day without taking your Prasad. Now after you went away I would eat the remnant of the food taken by anybody whom I looked upon as yourself. Once it so happened that I did not get any Prasad. So my mind was very much agitated and I was walking hither and thither on the verandah of the Ashram. I asked within myself: "Are you not giving me Prasad today?" That instant a wandering dog came to the Ashram and vomited on the steps. Seeing this with great joy I exclaimed: "Compassionate Papa! Hearing my prayer, you have come in this form to give me Prasad?" Saying this I accepted the Prasad. Thereafter my eagerness for Prasad disappeared.

O infinite Papa! After some time, as Gurudev was unwell you came back to Kasaragod to see him. I was happy at your unexpected return. After a few days you started again on the tour and returned in a few months.

O Papa, the ocean of compassion! A few weeks after you came back from tour, Dr. Rama Rao having finished his advance studies abroad returned and came to take us to Dharwar. When he arrived, thoughts came to me that I was very happy in your company and I wondered whether I would feel your separation after I left Kasaragod. How to know if I was fully established in you? As it is usual that whenever I had any doubts, you would give me the answers even without my expressing them to you, this time also you told me: "You have realized Ram. He has become yours. It must be understood that if you do not feel the separation from Ramdas, you have attained spiritual perfection." You then asked me to go with Dr. Rama Rao, and came to our house in Kasaragod to bid farewell to me. I started in 1930, two days before Chaturthi. On the way to Dharwar, I could not bear your separation and felt as though you were far away from me. I had not felt so bad previously even when you had gone on tour. So my belief that I had attained spiritual perfection was not correct. I came to know truly that I had yet to attain that blessed state and for some reason my way to it had been blocked. So my mind having fallen, I experienced excessive sorrow. At the thought of my imperfection, waves of grief arose in my heart. I tried to control my grief out of the fear that otherwise my ardour to realize my oneness with you might diminish. I thought: "If I allow my mind to be depressed like this it would be difficult for me to protect my physical purity. Besides, I would not be able to achieve the experience of my oneness with you."

O Papa, the lover of the humble! Therefore, the desire to join your presence soon became intense again. After reaching Dharwar, Dr. Rama Rao received transfer order to a place called Colaba near Bombay. So in the company of Anasuyakka and with Ganesh and Narayan I resided at Dharwar in the house of Anasuyakka's younger brother. At this time I had developed the feeling that not only my relatives were mine but also all people whom I met. So I was taking my meals sometimes in my house and sometimes in the houses of others. In this manner as I was taking meals in different houses daily, my mind became calm and was filled with a strange joy. Then I understood that if I took meals only in one house my mind would go into the world and it would not be possible for me to do Japa of Ramnam. So I could not resist taking at least some food in the houses of others. Since all people in the world are the embodiments of my Mother, I found it beneficial to take food which they offered me with love. I discovered that the rule that Sadhakas should live upon food procured by alms was quite proper. People in the house did not like my going every day to others' houses for my food. They were sorry as they believed that I was going to others' houses because I felt that I was not looked after well by them. From the worldly standard their point of view was not wrong. But, I could not avoid going to the houses of others. I was acting according to my faith and initiative and I did not trouble myself to explain to them the reason for my strange ways. I knew that you were testing me through those forms. Truly, since you are omniscient what was there for me to tell about anything?

O Papa, the lover of devotees! As days went by, the people in the house, not having understood my ways, started adversely criticising me and you. I could not bear all this. While I was at Kasaragod although they were speaking ill of you, I looked upon them as yourself and considered that you were slandering yourself. So their censure did not affect me. Later, I remained unconcerned when they talked ill of you. But now every bad word they said about you struck me like an arrow and I became angry.

O Papa, the protector of the helpless! All these happenings dragged my mind still to a lower plane. I thought if I went on at this rate my desire to become one with your eternal Being would remain unfulfilled and I might again suffer misery by getting entangled in the worldly life. This thought unsettled me and I firmly made up my mind to join you as early as possible in order to fulfil my burning aspiration.

O all-pervading Papa! So it was I decided to leave the house in which I lived with the object of meeting you again. Before coming to you I wanted to go to Bombay and some other places.

O Papa, the ocean of compassion! One day I resolved to start. At that time there was in the house the sister of Anasuyakka, whose name was Bhavaniakka and who was bed-ridden with illness. There was another woman who was unable to do any work. The male members used to go out for their work, and children to the school. At this juncture Anasuyakka thought that if she remained at home she would be blamed for my going away from the house. So, that very morning she went to a house in the neighbourhood. If anybody came to our house there was nobody in it even to offer a glass of water. I came to the conclusion that if I took all these matters into consideration I would not be able to become one with your eternal Being. I then told Bhavaniakka: "I am going." I saluted her and made myself ready to start. She was so much pained that she took me in her arms and embraced me tightly and asked me not to go. I struggled, freed myself from her embrace and made my way straight to the railway station with the only sari I wore.

O Papa, the ocean of grace! On my reaching the railway station, there came Golikere Sanjiva Rao, son of Anasuyakka's sister, and his friend, bringing with them some of my necessary clothes. They pressed me to return home. But I did not agree and as soon as the train arrived I boarded it. At last they procured a ticket and gave it to me and then tried to persuade me to accept the balance of the amount they had.

O Papa, the protector of your devotees! Now my mind was utterly confused. I felt I should not touch money because you and

Sri Ramakrishna did not handle it. But if I refused, it would be an insult to you as you have, in my eyes, become everything. I told you mentally that I would have money with me only as long as it was essential for my use. I accepted the amount offered with love by Golikere Sanjiva Rao.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Mother-Love

O PAPA WHO IS ALL AND BEYOND all! There were some mothers in the compartment in which I sat. They asked me many questions as to who I was and where I was going. To all of them I answered in terms of Ram. From this they thought that my mind was deranged. However they offered me some eatables which they had, but I did not take them. Duly I reached Poona where I took a cup of tea and then entrained for Bombay where I arrived at the scheduled time.

O Papa, the ocean of compassion! As the house people at Dharwar had wired to Bombay to our relative Balse Sadashiv Rao, his elder sister's son had come to the station with a car to take me to his house. The moment I sat in the car I pressed the young man to receive the money I had with me. But as he did not accept it I threw it out of the car as it was running fast, so that those who were in need of it might pick it up. Seeing this, the young man who came to take me questioned: "Why have you thrown away the money? Shall I stop the car for recovering it?" I told him: "I flung it out so that any needy person may have it. So you had better not stop the car." What feeling you gave me when receiving the money, the same feeling you retained with me when I rejected it.

O Papa, the ocean of kindness! I prayed to you that in all situations you should keep my mind in this well balanced state and not allow it to sink to lower levels.

O omnipresent Papa! I reached the house of Balse Sadashiv Rao where I was treated with all love. There I expressed my desire to see my younger sisters, Sumitra and Shanti, and the same evening went to the house of Lajmi Ramakrishna Rao, the husband of the latter. Thereafter I went to the houses of those who invited me or of those whom I wished to meet. In the circumstances, you in those forms, were treating me with great love and in some other forms you were mocking at me, but I was indifferent to both. I stopped mostly at Udipi Sanjiv Rao's house. You were acquainted with him for a long time and used to stay with him whenever you visited Bombay. Sanjiv Rao and his wife Lakshmi Devi treated me with all affection as though I were their own daughter.

O infinite Papa! I once visited the house of my junior aunt's son Udiyavar Dattatreya. At the time, Dr. Rama Rao was residing at Colaba. Dattatreya told me that he was going to the doctor's house and if I wished I could accompany him. As I too had a desire to see the doctor, Sundari and children, I went with him. They welcomed me with love and hospitality. But there I was mostly moving about alone by myself while doing all the time the Japa of Ramnam. The same day I returned to Udiyavar Dattatreya's house.

O Papa, the ocean of compassion! As Dattatreya, you suggested to me that it was not proper for me to travel alone from place to place. To this I replied: "Let it be as you say. I will do as willed by Ram." From there I came back to Lajmi Ramakrishna Rao's house. I found Ganesh and Narayan there with Bhavaniakka who had come to Bombay with the children during their Diwali holidays. When I had gone to Sundari's place her children Indu and Nalini, who were very fond of me, stubbornly insisted upon coming with me. In two or three days Sundari took them back to her house. Whenever I visited houses in response to their invitation I used to take with me Ganesh and Narayan.

O kindness-incarnate Papa! When the people in Lajmi's house came to know that I was to go to you, they were very much ruffled about it. Some of them tried their best to prevent me from going to your Ashram by renouncing them all. They asked me: "What would be the fate of your children?" I had the firm conviction that after the death of my husband, Dr. Rama Rao and his wife Sundari had become the parents of Ganesh and Narayan and they would protect and bring them up with all love and care. So I assured them that I had not the least anxiety about my children. I further told them: "If necessary an Ayah could be employed to look after them and what would have to be spent on me may be spent on her. All the service which I may render to the children will be done by the Ayah. Nobody can do for me the Sadhana that would lead me to the realization of oneness with Papa's eternal Being. Even if you wish to do this for me it is not possible for you." People in the house now definitely believed that I was giving up the house and they became anxious on this score. But owing to your unlimited grace, my mind did not waver and I decided upon the course I had set upon. Yet, my longing to come to you not being so strong, I had to pass some days more in Bombay.

O infinite Papa! Meanwhile, Udipi Sanjiv Rao received a letter from Rame's husband, Trikannad Chandrashekhar, that you had taken the vows of fast and silence. On hearing this news I thought how it could be possible for me to be corrected by you and to receive instructions from you for realizing my oneness with you if you observed the vow of silence. However, I resolved to be with you as soon as possible. I was keen on listening to your spiritual advice and acting up to it. At the time I had not the least feeling that I was renouncing my house because, by your grace, I had the vision that the universe was my home, and that travelling from one place to another was like passing from one room to another in the same house.

O all-pervading Papa! When this was my mental attitude I wrote you a letter in which I said: "O Mother, my sole aim in life is to merge my little self into your infinite and eternal Being. I can never live separated from you. Therefore, in future, giving up my household life I will spend my nights on hills. For the maintenance of my body, as I do not like mendicancy, I will join with the sweepers and scavengers or share with washerwomen or utensil cleaners in their work, and with what little food I get from them I will be contented. At other times I will engage myself in your service and in listening to your discourse." I took two copies of this letter—one of which I posted to you and the other I handed over to Sundari.

O Papa, the omnipresent! On reading this letter Dr. Rama Rao and Sundari gave me a reply reading: "Just as you consider Papa as your mother and you strongly wish to be with him, so also your children ardently wish you, their mother, to be near them." But I paid no attention to this remark.

O Papa, the giver of bliss! You, as my brother Dattatreya, prompted Ganesh and Narayan to tell me that they were determined to accompany me wherever I went. To this I told them: "If you both wish to come with me, you may by all means do so. I can do your service as well. For feeding you I shall give you a share of what I obtain from my work. You have to know that our lives are not solely intended for eating and learning but for realizing our identity with the eternal Being—God." When they heard me saying this they were frightened and said: "We don't want to go with you because we have to attend to our studies at school."

O love-incarnate Papa! Later, light dawned in me that you caused the above incident to happen with a view to test me. That is why you made Ganesh and Narayan speak as they did. The test was whether I really aspired for your real and imperishable Being or I had still attachment for your perishable forms. I prayed that you should never test me in this manner in future. If you did not make me stand your test there was no hope for my ultimate triumph in the attainment of my goal.

O Papa, the embodiment of bliss! Shanti questioned me thus: "You are calling every one as your mother. Is not the one who gave you birth also your mother? Are you not going to see her on your way to the Ashram?" At this suggestion I started with Sumitra to go to Bhatkal for seeing my mother. There were others in our company who were acquainted with us, going to Kasaragod. To see me off both Ganesh and Narayan had come with us as far as the docks. When we arrived at the docks we found there a Sannyasini who was also yourself, ready to board the steamer. Her many devotees had come to garland her. I was at the time dressed in a sari of orange colour presented to me by my friend. The moment I saw the Sannyasini I prayed to you: "Do not allow me to fall a victim to external glamour. What I want is the experience of your immortal existence and the consequent bliss. Don't grant me any other wish than this. Also don't let me reveal in any way externally my inner experience of your everlasting Being when I get it."

O all-pervading Papa! On board the steamer I cast looks towards the docks and saw both Ganesh and Narayan shedding tears. At this sight, for some time I gave way to uncontrollable grief. But immediately after, my sorrow disappeared and my mind, freed from the confusion, was restored to tranquillity.

O immanent Papa! When I reached Bhatkal, my mother on seeing me felt untold joy. Here I planned to stay for only three days. So my relatives and friends arranged to feed me with sweets and choice dishes. I also joined them in their culinary activities. Some among them, learning that I would soon be going to your place, warned me tauntingly in these words: "What is the sense of your knocking about alone? So many women have lost their honour by going about as you intend doing." At this I heatedly retorted: "Imagine how many women living in your families were unable to remain pure. How was it you could not save them? Were they not all living inside the four walls of their houses? Do give up the false notion that a woman can preserve her chastity by remaining in a house. If dishonour has to come to a woman it will happen wherever she is." Hearing me the critics softened and became silent.

O Papa, the storehouse of compassion! As my Ramnam Japa gained more and more force, I preferred to be away from the company of people. I used to say that if I was prevented from going to Papa, I would rather than remaining in the house, spend my days walking about on the seashore. Sumitra, interpreting my words incorrectly, thought that I intended to jump into the sea and end my life, and told my mother so. Now when I asked my mother's opinion about my intention to go and stay with you, she at once said: "Do what you will. Appayya Samarth will protect you."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Appayya Samarth

NOW WHO IS APPAYYA SAMARTH? How did my mother come to have so much faith in him? In answer, I am herewith narrating in brief Appayya Samarth's life.

Appayya Samarth was the elder brother of my father's grandfather's great grandfather. So I belonged to the seventh generation in the family. Appayya Samarth was from his childhood not only proficient in all arts but also fond of fun and laughter. He was even in his youth performing the daily worship, Japa and Sandhya regularly besides reading scriptures dealing with the essence of eternal truths. He loved solitude and was generous in giving alms to Sadhus and saints.

For some time Appayya Samarth used to reflect on the eternal verities and was discussing within himself about God and meditating on Him. In this manner, he was spending his days in solitude. Observing these ways, his father Rama Rao, fearing that his son might turn into a Vairagi, married him to a girl who was later known as Bhagirathi. Samarth, although married, did not give up his nature and his old ways. So his family members treated him with marked indifference.

It so happened, Appayya Samarth went as usual for the Darshan of Maruti—the village deity in Bhatkal—and on his return he beheld a radiant Yati in the nearby Dharmashala. The

Yati asked Appayya Samarth for a meal as he was fasting for several days. Samarth with all joy took the Yati to his home.

That day being Ganesh Chaturthi, all the men and women in the house were fully engaged in their various activities. So Samarth requesting the Yati to take his seat in the verandah, told his wife to serve him meals. As his wife went on serving food to the Yati he was finishing it all. Then he was served the Naivedya intended as offering to the family deity. When the people in the house came to know of this, there was a great hubbub resulting in the sudden disappearance of the Yati. Yet it was found that the vessels in which the food was prepared and kept were full and intact.

Samarth was aggrieved over the departure of the Yati without having his fill at meals. He, therefore, went in search of the Yati and reached as far as the seashore. Having looked for him until sunset and not finding him he walked into the sea out of despair. As he proceeded, the water of the sea covered his body more and more. When the water rose up to his nose and he was about to be drowned, he saw a flash of divine light coming from the Yati on the seashore. As the Yati beckoned Samarth, he rushed towards him. The Yati at once initiated Samarth with the five-lettered Mantra and directed him to go to Swami Vimalananda who lived in Bailur and told him that the Swami was his Guru and was none other than the Yati himself. So saying, the Yati vanished. As commanded by the Guru, Appayya Samarth went to Bailur and engaged himself in the service of Guru Vimalananda. He was not always living in Bailur, but as desired by his mother, was going home off and on.

After the Guru renounced his body, Samarth took to a wandering life, during which he composed several songs replete with the fervour of devotion, knowledge and dispassion. In his itinerary he came to Dharmasthala. Here Vardayya Hegde of Manjunath

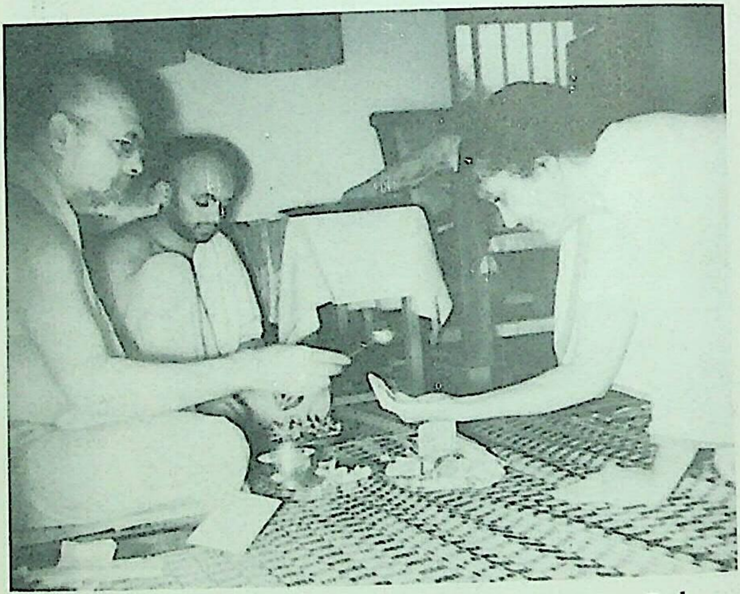
Temple had lost his eye-sight as a result of his indifferent treatment of a low caste devotee. As Hegde had heard of the fame of Samarth he appealed to him to endow him with eye-sight again. When Appayya Samarth prayed to God and went round the temple thrice with Hegde, the latter recovered his eye-sight.

The Goddess Mukambika was the family deity of the king of Kollur. To obtain the Prasad of the Goddess daily, the servants of the king used to go to the temple priest. One day owing to some unknown reason the priest got up late in the morning and the king's servants were seen waiting for the Prasad. As the morning worship in the temple was not performed till then, there was no Prasad to offer to the servants of the king. The priest, fearing that the king would be angry with him if no Prasad was sent, took out from his hair the Prasad he had worn the previous day and gave it to the king's servants. The king, having discovered hair in the Prasad, became wild and sent for the priest. The king threatened the priest with dire punishment if he did not show hair on the head of the Goddess. Thoroughly frightened, the priest went to Appayya Samarth who happened to be there and took refuge in him. Samarth assured him of protection.

Next morning the king had to go for a war and before he started, as was his custom, he first came for the Darshan of the Goddess. His visit to the temple was sudden. At the time Samarth was present in the temple and he prayed to the Goddess Mukambika for her Vision. The image of the Goddess became alive and appeared before them as a veritable animate Goddess with long and shining black hair.

Appayya Samarth performed many miracles of this nature. All these took place not from the Siddhis he had attained but owing to prayers offered to God in the spirit of a child to its mother. Just as a mother cannot deny what is asked of her by her child, similarly God cannot resist granting the prayer of his

Image of Lord Dattatreya in Nadgar Temple



Mother Krishnabai receiving Tirtha from our Beloved Anandashram Swamiji of Sri Chitrapur Math (1962) devotee. To bring out hair on the head of the image of Goddess could never have been possible by the use of mere occult powers, but could be done only by the power of devotion.

It was related by some old people that Appayya Samarth, before he gave up his body, called all his devotees and friends and after delivering illuminating discourses to them entered his bedroom. Even after a lapse of two or three hours, as he did not come out of the room, his friends went inside to find that Samarth had disappeared. Thereafter his devotees installed in this room a Linga of Umamaheshwar and later an image of Dattatreya, and thereby converted the room into a temple.

O bliss-incarnate Papa! Since we had faith and devotion from generation to generation for Appayya Samarth, whenever we were confronted with any difficulty, we would place it as his holy feet and seek his help. My mother had the highest faith in him, so she expressed herself as she did when I sought her permission to go to you. She asked me to sleep with her that night. I consented and laid myself down near her and she slept soundly with her hand resting on my body.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Coming "Home"

O ALL-PERVADING PAPA! NEXT morning on taking leave of everyone in the house I started on my journey to Kasaragod. The people in the house gave me a sari 18 cubits long and in return got back from me the orange coloured sari which I was then wearing as I wanted to come to you with nothing in hand. So I had only one sari that I wore. I came to Mangalore by steam-boat and thence by train I arrived at Kasaragod. There I at first decided to go to you straight by the route that led to your Ashram. But, as prompted by you from within, I walked on the road leading to Rame's house and coming near it I called out Rame and asked her if you were there. Receiving an answer in the negative, I proceeded directly to the Ashram. The way was over the hill and it was night time. Thick clouds were overhanging the sky and it was Kartika Purnima. In spite of the full moon I could not clearly see my way. Nevertheless, as I was acquainted with the road, and as there were small lights twinkling in the houses on the way, I walked on by short stages. But as I advanced I found no more houses with lights to guide me. The way was difficult to traverse and darkness had enveloped all around, with the consequence that I could not go onward. Under the illusion that as I was of fair complexion I could find my way by the light of my feet, I raised a little my sari and I saw a light in front of my feet as I walked on. Believing the light must be issuing from my feet, I was taken aback.

Papa, the protector of the humble! I can vouch for it that it was really you who provided me with this light to guide me through the darkness. I also wondered how great was your love for your devotees who had taken refuge in you. I was extremely delighted to know that you can day and night watch over them and afford them every kind of protection. But I prayed to you not to entangle me in your miracles.

Papa, the lover of devotees! By the help of the light provided by you I walked on and arrived in your presence. At that time four or five devotees were sitting around you. The moment we met, you and I could not control an outburst of laughter. As you were then observing the vow of silence, you wrote on a strip of paper: "Mother, you have come to your own home. The Ashram shall, in future, be your permanent place of residence," and showed the slip to me. Then I decided to remain with you doing your service, chanting Ramnam and listening to your discourses.

O all-pervading Papa! Seeing that you were drinking only milk for your nourishment, we did not feel happy over it and questioned you about the fast over and over again. On getting tired of answering our questions you stopped the exchange of notes with us. At the ardent appeal of Rame and her husband Chandrashekhar, you ate food and also broke your silence. Indeed, our joy knew no bounds.

O kindness-incarnate Papa! The following day Rame sent you a letter in which she said that she would provide food for both of us and that we should agree to her request. As Rame had inexpressible love for you and me we agreed. But it was arranged that Rame and the devotee who was sending food to you till then, should provide us with food for alternate months.

O Papa, the embodiment of compassion! The manner how you showered your rare love on us all, was like that of the mother who would pour her love on her child which she obtained as the fruit of her long penance and vows. But, just as the mother sometimes reprimands the child for its naughty behaviour, so you dealt with us in order to guide us on the right path. We knew you were admonishing us in strong words with the sole object of leading us on the path of God-realization. So, you not only made me hear your advice but also granted me the strength to act up to it. At this time, as I was often living in your company some of the devotees who were staying in the Ashram with us, hearing the slander about us started by the people in the house of the devotee who was sending you food ever since you came to Kasaragod, and other people in the town, and also on account of the threat from them, left the Ashram. For the same reason the number of devotees visiting the Ashram was also reduced.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Spiritual Illumination

O PAPA, THE OCEAN OF KINDNESS! You asked me to compose songs like Mirabai and others. To this I did not agree. Then you questioned me, "In that case what do you want to be like?" I replied, "I do not wish to be like anybody." To this you asked, "Do you wish to be like Ramdas?" I replied, "I don't want to be like you, a Guru carrying on the work as you do. I want to be one with your eternal and infinite Being, and know you and I are one. Besides, nobody should know that I have realized your immanent and transcendent Being." This kind of prayer was often rising in my heart.

O all-pervading Papa! In these days although I was saying that you were all-pervading Papa, this conviction having not taken root in me, secretly I felt that I had reverence and devotion still to your form. You told me this mental attitude of mine was responsible for the delay in attaining the knowledge of the Self—that is yourself. Truly, I had intense love for you just as a child for its mother. Because of my love for your form it was difficult for me to realize your immortal Being. Hence you advised me, with the object of expanding my narrow vision, to embrace with love the entire universe. In order to free me from the attachment to your form, you imposed on me strict restrictions that I should not speak to you, I should not see you and I should not do any service of you. Further, you bade me to stay in Rame's house and not come to the Ashram. Moreover you told me, so that my mind may go inward, I should write down what all I did during the day and what thoughts came into my mind. I am giving here briefly what I noted down at that time:

"Papa, Truth is yourself, untruth is yourself.
"Papa, Eternal is yourself, non-eternal is yourself.
"Papa, Pure is yourself, impure is yourself.
"Papa, All-powerful is yourself, weak is yourself.
"Papa, Kind is yourself, unkind is yourself.
"Papa, One is yourself, many is yourself.
"Papa, Auspiciousness is yourself, inauspiciousness is yourself.
"Papa, Permanent if yourself, impermanent is yourself.
"Papa, Love is yourself, lovelessness is yourself.
"Papa, Peace is yourself, wrath is yourself.
"Papa, Imperishable is yourself, perishable is yourself.
"Papa, All is yourself, everything is yourself.

"O Papa, compassion, love, peace, bliss, power, the very being of knowledge! For your child Krishnabai you are all and all in all. For her, except you there is none. Having manifested yourself as the entire universe you are at once the player and the witness of all play. Having yourself become everything, you and Krishnabai are one. O Krishnabai, the almighty and all-pervading Papa is dwelling in your heart. He and you are verily one. You are formless and also with form. You are invisible and you are also visible. Peace is yourself, confusion is yourself. Eternal is yourself, non-eternal is yourself. Purity is yourself, impurity is yourself. Filling all space you are peace and bliss which is the basis of your cosmic manifestation. You are He! He is you!

"O Papa, the embodiment of compassion and love! Thus you transformed your child Krishnabai into the very expression of bliss. To behold your personal form is bliss, so also not to see you as such is bliss. To remember you is bliss, so also not to remember you is bliss. That you are in my heart is bliss, so also to forget that you are in my heart is also bliss. Your giving me anything is bliss, so also your not giving me anything is bliss. To ask you and get is bliss, so also not to get is bliss. The bliss is within you, so also without you.

"Krishnabai, Papa who is in your heart and you are really one. All are yourself, all are yourself, all are yourself."

O compassionate Papa! In this way some days passed and you permitted me to come again to the Ashram. When I came to the Ashram, you at once instructed me to sit down for meditation. Before this I had never sat for meditation. Even when I tried to do so, I used to be overpowered by sleep. Therefore, I was doing Ramnam Japa when walking, sitting and lying down besides when serving you with my hands. I did not like to allow others to see my meditation and Samadhi. So when asked to sit for meditation I told you, "I do not want it." Then you told me:

"All saints got the highest spiritual experience only on practising meditation. Ramdas thought that you may, if Ram wills it so, get the experience even without sitting for meditation. But now it seems definite that you should practise meditation.

"For meditation, sit erect and never move your body even to the smallest extent for any reason whatsoever. As you advance, at some stage you may see some bright light and also get frightened. These should not cause your body to move. You should not fix your mind on Ramdas' form. You should take all thoughts that are coming to your mind as not yourself, and you should consider yourself above all thoughts and that you are the all-transcendent witness-consciousness.

"While the Kundalini is ascending, if you move your body even a little, the power will descend immediately and it will take a long time for it to rise again.

"The ascent of Kundalini up to Bhrukuti (Ajna) can be achieved without much difficulty. But, for that power to go from Bhrukuti to Sahasrara it is extremely difficult. External help of the Guru can take you only till the Kundalini reaches Bhrukuti, *i.e.*, near the goal of Self-realization. Beyond it Ramdas cannot help you as a form outside you. Ramdas, the absolute Truth within you, will then, by his grace, raise the power to Sahasrara and make you one with himself. This will give you the experience that you are the entire universe and beyond it."

O kindness-incarnate Papa! As I did not know how to sit for meditation, you taught me how to do it by yourself sitting in a particular posture. When I sat for meditation in the night as instructed by you, you were examining my face with a light to find what all changes were appearing on it. Moreover, the next day you questioned me what experience I gained during meditation the previous night. But I was extremely pained to confess that I did not achieve any spiritual experience as described by you. Then you remarked with some agitation, "So many days have passed, still you have not attained anything. The reason for the delay is that you still have attraction for Ramdas' form or you must have moved your body when sitting in meditation." Because of the delay I was very much upset. I used to weep and also pray to you within me with a highly perturbed mind, like a demented person, that you should soon make me realize my oneness with you. I thought I should better die than remain any longer without realizing you.

Papa, you are indeed permeated with compassion. As usual when I sat for meditation that night, suddenly I felt on the tip of the toes a sensation as if ants were creeping up. As this gradually spread upwards, the already affected lower parts became dead as it were, and the parts above became lighter. When this sensation reached the heart, I had a frightening shock.

O all-pervading Papa! Now I mentally debated with you within me in this way: "You said that you pervaded me internally and externally, but my state now is really fearful. However, I will not give up until I fully realize your immutable and immortal Being." The fear then disappeared, a sort of joy welled up in my heart and I saw a light. Then I practised saying as you had taught me: "I am neither fear nor bliss nor light. I am beyond these." Both these feelings of fear and joy and also the light then disappeared. When the power rose above the neck, all my thoughts ceased and with it my contention with you.

O All-merciful Papa! Thus the power ascended from the neck to Bhrukuti(Ajna). From there by your infinite grace it rose up with more speed and brilliance than that of lightning. About the experience I had at that time, nothing could be said except that I had indescribable bliss. How this happened? What is all this? Even for these thoughts the mind was not there as it had dissolved in your eternal Being. How long I remained in this state on that night I did not know. When I came out of it, *i.e.*, to the awareness of the external world, I felt, 'I am the universe and also am beyond it.' So long as I had the body-idea, I used to feel that I was the body from head to foot and that it was mine. In the same way, now I got the experience that I am the entire universe, and it is mine and I am beyond it.

O Papa, you are without beginning and without end. Since I was absorbed the whole night in your true Being, in the morning I had not any initiative to get up or to do any work and so I could not do your service as usual. When you pressed me to take food I took a little of it. As I had no desire to see anything, with a view to remain absorbed in you I used to lay myself down with eyes closed. As I lost all external consciousness I did not know how the time passed, nor was I aware that I was sometimes lying down with my legs turned towards you.

O infinite Papa! When you were giving me the experience of

Samadhi by making me sit for meditation, as the power within me reached the centre of Bhrukuti, my mental state was the same as when I was moving about in your service and doing the Japa of Ramnam. In fact, I did not know then to what state I had reached. You made me sit for meditation with the sole object of granting me the needed experience of Samadhi.

O Papa, the ocean of kindness! Just as you were pervading every particle of my body and causing different kinds of actions in it, making me feel all the time that this body was myself and mine, similarly now you granted me the exalted experience that you and I are one, by raising me to a state in which you made me aware that I am the entire cosmos and beyond it.

O compassionate Papa! How can I describe your real Being which is all and beyond all, without beginning and without end, immutable, static and infinite! How can I compare the imperishable Being with the perishable objects!

O Papa, the giver of bliss! I was in this state for several days and when I was coming to the awareness of the external world, I was doing your Seva and absolutely necessary work for taking care of my body or any service of others. I was doing so in a spirit of indifference. At this time, in spite of my being immersed in your Being all the time, I could not find joy in doing any work or service. I did not like to get back to the awareness of the external world from the state of obliviousness of it and the consciousness of immobility and eternity. Therefore, I was feeling that I should remain always forgetful of the body, because I got so much joy in that state. You were instructing me that I should practise Purushottama Yoga in which I could at once experience the peace of the static state and also feel side by side the bliss of movement by doing all actions by the body.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

New Anandashram

PAPA, THE BIRTHLESS AND deathless! When I was in this condition, one day Lakshmi Devi, your elder sister of Purvashram, and her husband Trikannad Bhavanishankar Rao came to invite us for the opening ceremony of their newly built house at a distance of three miles from Kanhangad. We told them that we did not wish to go for it, and after some time they left the Ashram.

Subsequent to their departure, one night at about 10 o'clock you came to the Ashram in the form of two drunkards. I was then seated a little behind where you sat. Near us there was a lantern burning. Now while one of them engaged you in talk for some time, the other one threw the lantern away into the yard. The lantern having broken, the light was extinguished, causing utter darkness. The man who flung away the lantern came towards me with the object of clutching my throat, but in the darkness he got hold tightly of my shoulders. Sensing what was happening, you came behind him and in order to free me from his hold, pulled him back with all your strength. Then the other man tried to drag you away from behind. Immediately you uttered the name "Ram" three times. From my mouth also issued automatically the name "Ram" twice. At this the man who held me, pushed me down forcefully and both of them ran away in fright. By the push from the man I fell down on the copper water-pot nearby and from there rolled down into the yard. By this fall I received a severe hit on the small of the back. On your enquiry I told you that all was well with me.

O Papa without beginning and without end! The sound of Ramnam uttered by us fell into the ears of a farmer who was residing nearby. He ran to where we were and came to know what had taken place and offered to sleep in the Ashram that night. But considering that to stay there any longer was not proper, and declaring it was all the will of Ram, you left the place for good that very night taking me with you. The farmer accompanied us as far as Rame's house and then departed.

O compassionate Papa! When we were proceeding to Rame's house that night, on the way I humbly begged of you, "I will come with you wherever you go. I have no other shelter than you. So don't abandon me." At first you did not respond favourably but in the end you could not refuse to abide by my request.

O Purushottam Papa! In spite of the chaos that resulted in our leaving the Ashram, since you had already merged me into your eternal Being and also granted me the experience that the universe was myself and still I was beyond it, these outward incidents produced no effect on me. So I did not harbour any ill-will towards the men for their violence on us in the Ashram.

O kindness-incarnate Papa! When we reached Rame's house her husband Trikannad Chandrashekhar pressed us to accept his father Bhavanishankar Rao's invitation and go to their new house. So we came to Kanhangad and after a stay of one or two days at Bhavanishankar Rao's mother's house at Hosdrug, we came to his new house.

O Papa who is love-incarnate! After we came to Bhavanishankar Rao's house, he, his mother, brother and sisters suggested to us to have an Ashram built on a nearby hill and make it our dwelling place. Accordingly, having received monetary help from some devotees, you started the construction of an Ashram on a hillock. By the untiring service of Bhavanishankar Rao's brother, Ganesh Rao, the Ashram building came up without much delay. Until the construction of the Ashram was over we remained in Bhavanishankar Rao's house. The Ashram in Kasaragod was called Anandashram. So this Ashram is also named Anandashram. Even after the completion and opening of the Ashram buildings, Bhavanishankar Rao and his wife were offering us help in various ways.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Clash of Opposites

O ALL-PERVADING PAPA! IN SPITE of your having given me the experience of bliss from the knowledge that you and I were one and that the whole universe was myself and mine, I did not experience such bliss and peace when I was engaged in work as I did when sitting or lying down. I asked myself the question: "How is it that I cannot feel the same joy when I am engaged in work as I am getting when I quietly sit doing no work?" If the two states, *i.e.*, rest and activity, did not synchronise, I feared I might fall back into the same state as I had when I was at Dharwar.

O Papa, the ocean of grace! When you had kept me body-conscious, even though I did not know who I was, when I was doing work for my own sake I felt that my body, 'I' and the work were the same. So I prayed to you to give me the experience which would enable me to maintain, when I am active, the same joy I had when I was oblivious of the external world through oneness with you.

O infinite Papa! As I did not have so much joy in activity as in inactivity, sometimes I used to see faults in you, such as that you loved some greatly and you did not at all love some others. When some committed any mistake, you used to scold them, but would not scold others who committed the same mistake. In some cases you showed preference by giving them what they wanted without their asking for it, whereas in other cases you were not giving even when they asked for it. When some were laid up with illness you were taking every care of them. On the other hand, you were totally indifferent to others in the same condition. When I noticed such differences in you I would object and raise a controversy with you.

O all-pervading Papa! Whenever you read *Puranas*, if I heard censure of women who were held responsible for obstructions in the way of men's Sadhana and any passing references to weaknesses of women, I would be enraged and would say that just as women were a hindrance, so also men were a hindrance to women in their Sadhana. In fact, there was little justification for either men or women criticising each other adversely. The downfall of either is solely due to their own mental weaknesses. I further debated with you that if one possessed intense desire to realize oneness with you, nobody could stand in one's way, be it man or woman.

O Papa, the ocean of kindness! I was strongly opposing your view-point when you held out before us the qualities of a Jnani such as compassion, forgiveness and peace, and at the same time spoke of the opposite qualities found in an Ajnani. I would contend that even Jnanis did possess the qualities which you saw in Ajnanis. I argued that it was not wrong that there should be in the Jnani the qualities of the Ajnani. In the Jnani there should be all qualities; if not, he cannot be perfect. Since the Jnani is everything and beyond everything, how could it be possible for him to have only good qualities and still be perfect? Although during Puja the right hand is used considering it to be more auspicious, it is not possible to do Namaskar to God without using also the left hand. You made me use my good qualities to draw my mind within in order to merge in you. You made me also use my bad qualities, the six enemies, to subdue the out-going tendencies of the mind instead of using them against others.

O Papa, the giver of bliss! Before you made me one with you, you showed me the various modifications of desire, wrath, greed, attachment, pride and envy in me—the complete Lila of these six enemies. Thereafter you directed my desire and wrath which were pursuing perishable happiness to flow towards the imperishable happiness. So my desire was transformed into an intense longing to realize your infinite and eternal Being. Whenever any obstacle presented itself within me against the fulfilment of my desire, anger became a help. The greed that obsessed me, when I was of the world, aided in not minimising to the least extent my intense longing to become one with your infinite Being. The attachment I had at first for my relatives now rushed like a stream towards your eternal Being.

O all-pervading Papa! When my keen longing to realize you increased in vigour, the pride in me which was there before, gave place to divine intoxication through unceasing communion with your Being. When I was trying day and night to merge myself in your Being, any thought of the world would drag the mind to the lower levels. Whenever any other thought than that of yourself entered the mind, I would feel envious of you.

O omnipresent Papa! In this manner, having triumphed over all difficulties that confronted me, you made me practise seeing you in all beings, and thereby granted me the experience of your immutable, static and eternal Being.

O love-incarnate Papa! On account of the quarrels ensuing from our controversies, you used to get angry and give up talking, observe fasts and run away often in the nights to the top of the hill. On such occasions, either I or others would go up to you and bring you back to the Ashram by apologising. However much you got angry with me, since you are my mother, I used thereafter to speak to you with love as before. On your part you would also forget the past and treat me with the same love as previously. Even then, I did not give up my contumacy.

O Papa! You are really an ocean of grace. I found out at last that you were in all things opposing my views and acts and controverting me with the object of granting me the Sahaja. Your wish was to give me bliss and peace equally in both these conflicting opposites. You gave me the full understanding in a short time why you were acting as you did. Although all the limbs of my body from head to foot are different from each other and their functions are different in nature, still I look upon the body as myself. In the same way you made me experience that you exist as the universe with its various forms, calling yourself by different names and doing actions in different ways and that all those are myself and I am beyond them.

O blissful Papa! When you first brought me into the world you made me think that I was only a body. In that state I would treat my body as I liked—at one time I treated it with attention and at other times with inattention. For instance, if I got even a small hurt in any part of my body I would take very great care of it, whereas when I fell ill, I would not take any notice of it. Living in this way, I had no anxiety whether I did any work for my body or not and yet my love for the body when I did nothing for it, even when needed, remained constant. Moreover, when I did not feel the difference between myself and the work done for the sake of my own body, the moment the work was finished I was not bound by the action. Whenever I did anything, the action did not leave behind any impression and so I remained unattached and ever free.

O compassionate Papa! Similarly you made me realize that I am the entire universe and if I did any service to anybody or not I have equal love for all and I am not bound by what I did or not.

Now I found that I have the same joy in both action and inaction. It was to give me this experience that you debated with me so much.

CHAPTER TWENTY

I am the Universe

O ALL-PERVADING PAPA! HAVING granted me the vision of the entire universe and that which is beyond it, you gave me bliss and peace equally in active and inactive states. So when I was in the state of movement, that is, when doing work, my mind remained steady and equalised—when I was loving one and not another; when I did not give anyone when asked for anything he needed, and gave another of my own accord; when I did not scold even when anybody committed a mistake but scolded another when he committed the same mistake; when anybody was ill in bed, though necessary, I did not give any attention to him, while with great love I took care of another who was ill. Since the whole universe is myself I act differently with different people. Just as with regard to my body itself, when I was body-conscious, I was sometimes doing work necessary for it at one time and totally abstained from doing anything for it at another.

O Purushottam Papa! From my childhood I had heard from others and also from stories from books that to saints and saintly people all were equal and in them there was no greed and attachment. But in all the saints that I had seen there was one or other of these frailties. Therefore, instead of having a good opinion of them, whenever I saw or heard about them, though I used to feel a kind of joy in their presence, I was afraid of them.

O Papa, the giver of bliss! In order to remove my misconception about saints, you made me come to Kasaragod in your presence. When I came there I heard you describing the state of the immortal Reality free from the pairs of opposites, beyond the Trigunas, and transcendent, static and immutable. Moreover, you told me that if I truly loved all beings believing that Ram dwells in them, then only it must be considered that I really loved Ramdas. On my listening to these words of enlightenment, since you were like the wish-fulfilling cow, Kamadhenu, you fixed me up in this state of equality as I wished. In fact, I had prayed to you from the start that you should not only give me the experience of your eternal existence, but also enable me to realize in all things and their movements the integral or perfect and immanent Divinity.

When I was praying like this I knew that in the world there is the play of dualities such as good and bad, truth and untruth, love and hate, peace and conflict, like and dislike, fame and obloquy, etc. Just as all the several parts of our body are necessary in their respective places and they do not undergo any change after our realizing the Self, similarly it is not possible for anybody even after God-realization to give up his good and bad qualities on the manifest plane. But the manner in which they are used will be different. At first a person uses the good qualities for himself and his bad qualities against others. After realizing the Atman the person uses all these qualities for himself alone as the Virat Purusha. As we do not look upon ourselves with hate and jealousy, so after we have attained the vision of the eternal, it is not possible for us to hate anyone as that one is none other than our own Self. Since you are manifest in entirety in all beings, we cannot imagine that we could see you only in what we like and not in what we dislike. Otherwise we have to admit that there is a power other than you, and therefore we have to take you as imperfect. Therefore if we want to realize you as perfect, we have to see you alone in all beings and things, good or bad.

O Sadguru Papa! I was praying from the beginning that I should have a Guru who had the experience of a married and worldly life, having wife and children, and also advanced in age. Besides, I wanted him to be one who led a spiritual life, having renounced the worldly life. The reason is, even Shankaracharya who was a Jnani, in order to gain worldly experience, had to enter the dead body of a king.

O beginningless and endless Papa! When I first came to you, you were of a peaceful and compassionate nature and were entirely free from wrath. At this, doubts used to arise in my mind like waves. Since the quality of anger was absent in you, how could I take you to be perfect? If perfect, how was it you did not possess anger?

O compassionate Papa! Once when I returned from home to the Ashram I found you angry with Rukmabai. Seeing this I came to know that you were really perfect, and this discovery yielded me untold joy. Then I wished that you should also get angry with me and I should still continue to love you as when you treated me with affection. So also, this love and reverence of mine must be there for all others, who are your forms, even when they got angry with me. This was my prayer to you. On reflection we know that sometimes we get angry and condemn and find fault with ourselves but the next moment our anger subsides and we get back to our usual mood of love and kindness towards ourselves. Similarly, after I gained the experience that I am the universe, I scold those who are walking on the wrong path, and yet love them.

O Papa, the giver of bliss! You gave me the experience, in fulfilment of my prayer, of your eternal Being. When I had the body-idea, even though I could not give up the good and bad in me, I loved myself. Similarly, now I love all beings in the universe as they are myself. Even if there are shortcomings in some of them, since they are myself, I cannot possibly be unloving towards them. After you gave me the experience of my oneness with you who is all and beyond all, my attitude towards you in my dynamic being is that of a child towards its mother, bereft of any sense of duality.

O Papa, the beginningless and the endless! Do grant me the discriminative faculty to express how you and I performed actions after I realized my oneness with you, and how I carried on my activities before I attained this consciousness. Before the aspiration sprang up in me for realizing your immortal Being, that is, when I thought that I was only a body, I was doing all actions looking upon all beings and creatures as different from each other. But when I came to you and in a short time after I received initiation of the Mantra, I got the vision, 'All is yourself.'

O love-incarnate Papa! After the initiation of the Mantra, instead of calling the body as 'I', I thought I could use the term 'Krishnabai', so that my ego-sense might soon disappear. You had from the beginning adopted this method when you referred to yourself. When I adopted the same method you became the object of mockery to some people. Then I thought within myself that whether I say, "Krishnabai is doing it" or "I am doing it", in both cases the doer is yourself. So I did not see any difference between "Krishnabai" and "I". Whatever way I expressed myself thereafter, it was all the transcendent Papa who is the same in all, whether I said: "I", "you", or "others".

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Early Life

O INFINITE PAPA! DO GIVE ME the power and intelligence to delineate truly how you, who have revealed yourself in every atom comprising countless universes, made me play and talk with you under the guidance of yourself as my mother, father and relatives.

O Papa, the giver of bliss! You gave me birth on Sunday, 20th September 1903 at about 9 o'clock on Mahalaya Amavasya night. All-gracious as you are, in order to infuse into my blood the aspiration to become one with your immortal Being, you caused my birth in the family in which were born the great devotees of God, such as Appayya Samarth, Shantibai and Saraswatibai.

O compassionate Papa! As the planets at the time of my birth were inauspicious to my parents, an astrologer advised that I should be given away as a gift to anybody when I was yet a baby. But as my parents had lost their first two children—they were excessively fond of me and my elder brother Dattatreya and so they did not agree to give me away as a gift. Therefore, I was held by a woman on one side of a cow and after passing me underneath the cow's belly, was handed over to another woman standing on the opposite side of the cow. This woman in her turn passed me underneath the cow and gave me to the first woman. This process was gone through three times. In order that the bad influence of the planets might not affect me, the cow was given away as alms to some recipient. A few days later, a Sannyasini who was visiting my parents for alms frequently and who had heard the talks about me asked my parents to give her the baby—which was myself—if they did not want it. So I was given away to her in exchange for a quantity of bran. Then I was repurchased from her on payment of rupees two.

O Papa, the lover of devotees! When I was about four or five years of age, like my younger sisters, I insisted upon sleeping by the side of my mother. My mother then would jokingly tell me, "You are not my daughter, we have purchased you for a price." When I wanted to know what was the meaning of this, I was told all that had happened when I was a baby.

O Papa who is all bliss! At the time of my birth, plague was raging in Haliyal and when I was six months old my mother Indirabai had an attack of plague. So all the members in my family showered their love on me more than ever. I was thereafter regularly lulled to sleep by my uncle. I would not sleep unless a particular song was sung to me. The first two lines of that song are:

O Krishna, what is there in your flute?
My mind gets enchanted.

When I grew up my uncle was making fun of me by telling me of this incident.

O Papa, the embodiment of love! My father's name was Nadgar Venkat Rao. He was also called Venkataramaniah. He was very fond of me and I also liked him very much. I was happy to act according to his wishes in all matters. So I was serving my father in various ways Then some one would remark, "You are doing your father's work exactly as he does." Hearing this I would be transported with joy.

O compassionate Papa! On one occasion a friend of my father visited our house and questioned my father, "Who is there in your family who like yourself will bring fame and name to it?" As I was helping my mother in the household chores and also helping others in the same way by little acts of service, my father considering this nature of mine, pointed out at me and said, "It is this girl who will do it." Though I did not know the full significance of these words at the time, I was happy to know that I was going to be like him.

O Papa, the ocean of kindness! My parents had six children. The first one is Dattatreya, the second is myself. After me Shanti was born, then Mangesh and Umesh. The last one is Sumitra.

O all-pervading Papa! We all children were separately loved by six different members of the family. I was loved by my father and my cousin Ammaniakka. I had great love for my brothers and sisters and I took good care of them by serving them in many ways as instructed by my mother. I was also scolding them, sometimes punishing them when necessary.

O love-incarnate Papa! Once when I was about five years of age, my father had promised that he would get gold bangles made for Shanti and me. One of our relatives in this connection said to my father, "You say often that Kutti (I was in those days called Kutti instead of Krishnabai) is not jealous of Shanti and she gives all things to her. Now when you are presenting Shanti first with gold bangles, let us see how Kutti feels about it." My father fell in with this move. From that day this relative was telling me in fun, "No bangles for you. They are only for Shanti." Then with a pale face I would go to father and ask him, "Bapa, (we used to call father in this way) are there no bangles for me?" My father had no intention to say anything against what the relative said, but still not liking to tell me a lie, said only this much, "You will also have bangles."

O Papa, in the form of my mother! After the lapse of some days, to test me, the bangles prepared only for Shanti were brought. At once with great joy I asked for whom the bangles were intended. The moment I was told that they were meant for Shanti, with joy I ran to her and brought her where my father was and saw to it that she was given the bangles. At this my father without being able to control himself said, "Look, what did I say?" A little after, my bangles also came.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

My Mother and Father

O INFINITE PAPA! YOU IN the form of my father, possessed a very good nature. He was full of compassion and so could not bear to see the sufferings of others. He had also a forgiving nature. He was once travelling by train in connection with the installation of the image of Dattatreya in the Nadgar Temple. The glass pane of one of the windows of the compartment in which he sat was broken. For this my father was held responsible and as a penalty he had to pay a fine of rupees two hundred. Some people had seen that this breakage of the glass pane was there before my father took his seat in the compartment. They told my father, "Keep quiet, don't pay the fine and we will bear witness for you." But my father without agreeing with them, replied, "I have to pay the railway company what I owe them," and remained silent.

O compassionate Papa! My father was a Government officer and later became a forest contractor. There were so many men working under him. He was earning well and was in affluent circumstances. Once when he was going for his work to the forest on a bullock cart, a group of thieves from their hiding place started flinging stones at the cart. The result was that the cart-man and the bullocks sustained severe injuries. Thereafter the thieves came to my father and were bent upon killing him for getting possession of a diamond ring which he was then wearing on one of his fingers. My father told them that he would give them the diamond ring of his own accord. But the thieves raised their knives to cut his throat when suddenly my father avoided the blow from their knife by holding up his hands against the knife. My father's thumb received a severe cut and the thieves inflicted many wounds on his body also. My father gave the diamond ring to the thieves and they took to their heels. Even when his servants and town people offered to capture the thieves, my father did not allow them to do so and he forgave them.

O Papa, the protector and destroyer! At my eighth year my father got piles trouble. I liked much to serve him. He also liked to be served by me alone. I prayed to God that if my father recovered his health I would do Pradakshina and Namaskars for a certain number of times. Even after the passage of two years in this way, father's health did not improve. On the other hand, it became worse. He got also fever and became bed-ridden. In about eight days the illness took a serious turn and his life was despaired of. The day when he was to breathe his last, Durgabai, my aunt, took us all to the room in which my father was lying in bed, and asked us to pour Tirtha into his mouth. I did not know the meaning of all this and so I returned to my room and prayed to God for my father's recovery. That very night on 13th January, 1914, Makara Sankranti day, my father expired and departed to the other world. Next day, having come to know of this calamity I was immersed in grief. I would sit by myself with a vacant mind.

O Papa, the protector! As we were reduced to abject poverty, even to cremate my father's body we confronted great difficulty. Whenever the servants my father had engaged were married, he provided them with ample means for eking out an independent livelihood. They used to carry on business having connection with neighbouring villages and towns. Of these, one was doing business in Haliyal itself by opening a shop. This man paid ten rupees towards the cremation of my father.

O Papa, the ocean of kindness! Prior to my father's death when he was laid up with illness a creditor was sitting near him. I then went to my father and lay myself down by his side in close touch with him. My father, who is your form, being annoyed with me, said in a somewhat stern voice, "You don't allow me to rest quietly even for a moment." I felt disgraced by this reprimand, with the result that my love for him diminished to some extent. Thenceforward, although I was doing all kinds of service for him, I was not taking liberties with him as before.

O ocean of grace! By bringing about this little incident you reduced my attachment to my father so that it might help me later in the attainment of my oneness with your imperishable Being.

O all-pervading Papa! After the demise of my father my love for my mother increased considerably. But now I was looked upon by the people in the house with disfavour to the same degree as I was at one time looked upon with favour. You, in the form of my younger aunt, were finding fault with me in whatever I did. In fact, as I was not doing anything wrong I would angrily retort. Although my mother used to give me sound advice, whenever my aunt teased me I used to treat her with contempt.

O compassionate Papa! After I was married, this same aunt treated me with great love. Whenever I happened to come to my mother's house at Bhatkal she fed me with delicious dishes, washed my clothes and was never tired of doing all kinds of service for me. She was also doing with love all the work in the house, besides serving my mother and those who were ill.

O Papa, lover of the devotees! My mother, who is of course yourself, was of a guileness and peaceful nature. She would not wound in any way the feelings of others. She had great love for her children. Even though she was suffering from rheumatic pains, she would not rest content without providing things as demanded by her children. Rarely she would chastise or scold her children, but when she did so, it was difficult to bear the rigour of it. In my fifth or sixth year, one day when I was speaking to her I used a bad word. For this she beat me so severely that one of my teeth was knocked off. Still I did not promise I would not do so again. My mother getting angry beat me again. At last I confessed that I was wrong. This was the first and the last time that my mother punished me.

O Papa who is without birth and death! In the house in Haliyal in which my mother dwelt, there were about twenty-five people. My mother was living with them all in a friendly spirit. She did not differentiate between the members of her family and the others in the house. She was treating them all alike. Whenever she prepared some nice eatables she would lovingly feed even cows, dogs and cats. When preparing such eatables, if any new persons came, she was having them made in more than usual quantities. It might be because of my mother's generous nature that, whenever she cooked nice things, on that day there would be more than the usual number of guests.

O Papa, the ocean of compassion! My mother had always with her cloth pieces for blouses. Whenever any Sumangali came to our house, she would not be satisfied without giving her one blouse piece, and if there were children she would give them gifts of money. My mother stayed with her brother at Bhatkal until her sons got employed. Then she lived with them in Bombay until her death in the year 1941.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Reminiscences

O ALL-PERVADING PAPA! IN my fifth year I was sent to school for my education. The timings of the school were from seven in the morning till ten, and in the afternoon from two to five. I was good at arithmetic and other subjects, but backward in reading lessons in the class.

O immanent Papa! Once when I was about to start with my mother for Bhatkal I playfully raised myself on the dwarf compound-wall in the lane but slipped down and received a hard knock on my forehead as it struck against the stone of the wall. The result was that when I returned from Bhatkal and attended school, my memory had so far weakened that I could not remember the lessons taught to me. So my father engaged a private tutor to teach me arithmetic at home, but all efforts to teach me proved futile. One day the teacher at school, getting angry with me, exclaimed looking at me in a tone of derision, "You ass don't learn whatever is taught to you." At this insult I got wild and stopped attending the school from that day. At that time I was reading in the fourth standard and my age was eight years. Thenceforward I joined heartily my mother in her household work.

O compassionate Papa! Sometimes I used to be in the company of my girl-friends and cook food in small vessels. In due course, I got a desire to prepare food for all people in the house. Since there were in the house in all about twenty-five members and for cooking and other work there were people engaged, it was not possible for me to cook for all people in the house. Therefore, whenever I got the opportunity I would visit the neighbouring houses and after cooking for them as instructed, return home.

O gracious Papa! The eatables I liked most were pancakes made of rice flour and also sweets. I was extremely fond of sweetened saffron rice. Daily I would be happy if I was given rice mixed with a little ghee and sugar. On any day if I was not provided with this kind of food I would get upset and cry. Then my father would instruct my mother and get me the food I wanted. I would not touch the food given to me without its being first offered as Naivedya to the family deity. To be assured that it was offered to the deity, there ought to be in it a Tulsi leaf.

O Papa, the infinite Being! When I was a girl I was afraid of animals, yet I had great reverence for cows. In our house at Haliyal we had about fifteen cows. Father was feeding them with great affection. At feeding time he would invariably stand near the cows.

O Papa, the ocean of compassion! When I grew up I had no opportunity to keep cows. When I was in Sirsi, when the desire for a Guru was keen in me, before I came to you I did Pradakshina of a cow in the house and prayed to her for a Guru. As though in fulfilment of my prayer to the cow, I came to you and accepted you as my Guru, with the result that by realizing my oneness with your immortal Being, I attained everlasting bliss.

O infinite Papa! When things were going on like this, poverty stepped into our house. Formerly, my father used to give large amounts of money on loans or in charities, but now he had to seek shelter and help of others. My father, finding that I was fit to assume the responsibility of taking care of money, entrusted me with the keys of the money-box. On this account one of my cousins, who was none other than yourself, treated me with aversion.

O love-incarnate Papa! It was the custom in the family that before going to bed in the upper storey of the house, some elderly person would tell us stories from the *Puranas* daily and we used to listen to them. As for me, while listening to the stories of the *Puranas*, I would get drowsy and go to sleep.

O Papa, the wonderful player! One day my cousin came to tell us stories. I used to hang the key given by my father on a string round my neck. That night the key disappeared. Next day we had to break open the box and we found that my mother's ear ornament and the gold rings of the children were stolen. At once I came to know who was the thief. As I was then only nine years old and I knew nobody would believe my word and so kept quiet. Then my cousin, who was none other than yourself, remarked: "This is what happens when the keys are entrusted to children."

O Papa who is without beginning and end! After my father passed away we continued to stay in Haliyal for a year. At this time the management of the house was in the hands of my maternal uncle. Now many household articles were disappearing. When thus things in the house were stolen, the Police Inspector finding out that my cousin was committing the thefts in the house, asked us to hand him over to the police. As my mother had a tender corner in her heart for him, she told him to run away to a nearby village early next morning. As directed by my mother, he left us and reached the village.

O Papa, the saviour! As I was for a long time suspicious about him, now taking advantage of his absence I thought of breaking open his box to see what all things were in it, but I did not know how to do so. At last with the help of a man-servant I broke the lock of the box and discovered in it all the stolen articles, including my mother's ear ornament and the gold rings of the children. Moreover, we also found in it the key that was stolen. I shouted that the thief was found out. Then my mother scolding me, asked me to put in the box all the stolen articles I had taken out. But on my insistence and as suggested by neighbours, she agreed to my removing from the box her ear ornaments. He returned the same evening. When he came to know what had happened in his absence he became angry with me and scolded me. At last, thinking that it was not proper for him to remain any longer in our house and knowing also that he was at fault, he left Haliyal for his native place.

O all-loving Papa! Shantiakka, wife of my father's elder brother, had the vision of Avadhuta Dattatreya. Her daughter Saraswatiakka was also a great devotee of God. Both of them were widows and they stayed in the Nadgar Temple at Bhatkal, spending their time in Puja, Japa and Bhajan. Shantiakka has composed in Marathi language many devotional songs. After she renounced her body, her daughter Saraswatiakka continued to live in the same temple, carrying out all the daily routine without fail as set by her mother. After her passing away her devotees and Nadgar Mangesh have been in charge of the temple management.

O Papa, the ocean of grace! After we came to Bhatkal and started living there, Saraswatiakka was helping us as much as she could. It was she who fixed up my marriage alliance with Kalle Lakshman Rao. It was again she who celebrated my marriage in the Nadgar Temple with great pomp. But at the time of the marriage I was inwardly grieving over my departed father and also over the poverty stricken state of my mother, brothers and sisters. So the grandeur of the marriage, far from giving me joy, inflicted only pangs of grief in my heart.

O all-immanent Papa! Lakshman Rao was the second son of

Kalle Annappayya and Anasuyakka. He and his elder brother Dr. Rama Rao, loved each other like Rama and Lakshmana. They had also two other brothers, namely, Umanath and Shankar. Kalle Annappayya was the headmaster of the High School in Coondapur and other places. He was of a very peaceful nature and had no quarrel with anybody. Even for his children he had not any care or anxiety. His wife Anasuyakka, when she was only eighteen years old, had received initiation from a Mahatma and was performing daily religious duties regularly. She was spending most of her time in listening to *Puranas* and performing worship. She was rendering help to her people at home and others with money and medicines as much as was in her power to do so. For bringing happiness to others she would work hard. After her husband died she was carrying out the same daily routine but was going on pilgrimages more than before. She has been for some time living in Anandashram.

O Papa, giver of bliss! After my marriage and before I joined my husband, for some time I lived in Karkal in the company of my husband's elders and then I went to Bombay. In Bombay I was happy in every way. My husband Lakshman Rao and his elder brother Dr. Rama Rao loved each other so well that Dr. Rama Rao's wife Sundari and myself were to each other like sisters.

O all-immanent Papa! Lakshman Rao, who is none other than yourself, used to provide me with all things even before I thought of having them. But I did not want all those things. Whenever I remembered my mother's house I would with great agitation say to myself, "Oh! how poor they are. They haven't got anything." I had then a strong desire that I should send some aid to them. When I once opened my heart at home in this respect, the house people did not condescend to fulfil my wish but opposed it. So I was very much pained at heart, but I did not reveal my sorrow to anybody and suffered silently. When I was at meals eating delicious food, I would remember my brothers and sisters and find it difficult to eat. Yet there were many occasions when I sent things to my mother's house by stealth, but I was not happy over this. When at any time I went to my mother's place and returned, my mind used to be torn with grief for their sake. Knowing this my husband would not permit me to stay long in my mother's house.

O universal Papa! In our house we were in all about eight or ten souls. Although others praised me, Anasuyakka's sister was deliberately hard on me; she was picking holes in whatever I did and was persecuting me. For about two years I bore all things patiently. By this she became more and more irascible in her attitude towards me, instead of being mollified. This treatment which she meted out to me gave room for grief to others in the house.

When things were going on like this, one of the relatives in the house told me if I did not give her suitable retorts he would himself fight with her on my behalf. I did not like this and so I took up the cudgels myself and started quarrelling with her. The result was that my life thereafter was filled with bitterness. But gradually she realised her mistake and began to love me and even asked me to forgive her for her past conduct. On my part I also asked her pardon for my mistakes. Thenceforth, we lived together harmoniously like mother and daughter.

O Papa, the beginningless and endless! In my sixteenth year Ganesh and in my eighteenth year Narayan were born. As paid workers were engaged to look after the children I had not much work to do for them. Ganesh and Narayan had greater love for their father than for me. The father was also very fond of them.

Ganesh and Narayan were attracting not only the people at home but also the casual visitors who came to our house.

Mother Krishnabai at Kasaragod Ashram (1930)

Krishnabai with her Husband, Lakshmanrao A. Kalle
(1918)

O Papa, the ocean of kindness! We had wished that my third confinement should also take place in Bombay itself. My mother and junior maternal uncle came to Bombay to see me as I was then unwell. Since I had not gone to my mother's house for three years, they pressed me to accompany them when they were returning. As my husband knew beforehand about his approaching death he asked me not to go with them. He said something to this effect, but I did not grasp it at that time. When I told him that I did not understand what he said, he did not repeat it. Assuring my husband that I would return within a month, I resolved to go to Bhatkal escorted by my uncle, mother and sister Shanti. Seeing my stubbornness, my husband said, "Without cause you are thinking of your mother's place and feeling miserable. You are inviting trouble for yourself. You will know later what kind of love those people have for you." Guessing that my children who would go with me might not be looked after well, he sent with me his mother Anasuyakka to take care of them. So Anasuyakka accompanied us to Bhatkal. But she lived in Bhatkal only for a short time and proceeded to Puttur for the Darshan of a Mahatma.

O Papa, the infinite! Whenever I came to Bhatkal, every time when I started to return to Bombay, my junior maternal uncle would prevent me from going, by giving one reason or the other. This time, he purposely postponed the Upanayanam ceremony of my brother Umesh for which I was obliged to stay, and so he prevented me from going to Bombay.

O Papa who is all kindness! Meanwhile, my husband's health in Bombay deteriorated and his death was fast approaching. On the day of the Upanayanam we received two wires from Dr. Rama Rao, one conveying the sorrowful news of my husband's death and the other of condolence. At the time I was feeling physically tired and depressed and was almost the whole day lying in bed. Only the following day my mother gave me the sad news. The shocking information created a void in my life. It appeared to me that I had turned an orphan, helpless and destitute, thrown away as it were into the streets. And it was some time before I wept and gave myself away to grief. My grief was all the more intense because I did not act up to my husband's words before leaving Bombay and also because in spite of his having hinted me that his death was approaching I could not be present at his death bed.

O compassionate Papa! After the death of my husband I began to sense something wrong with the nature of my junior maternal uncle who is, of course, yourself in that form. My erstwhile impression that of all maternal uncles he was the only good man and worthy to be respected in every way, received a shock and in my heart arose a wave of hatred towards him. His love for us was similar to the love of the Kauravas for the Pandavas. He had the intention of getting money from my husband and spending it as he liked. As this did not happen, he began slandering my husband. He was also getting angry with me because my husband did not help his mother-in-law's people with money. At this I was roused and asked him, "How much have you helped your father-in-law? As for me, I have helped my mother secretly with more than two thousand rupees."

O love-incarnate Papa! On account of the reprehensible behaviour of my junior maternal uncle I decided to go to Dr. Rama Rao's house for my confinement, giving up the desire to live any longer in my mother's house. But on Dr. Rama Rao's advice that I would be asked to come to his house only after the confinement, I had to remain there only. There was reason for this. My junior maternal uncle, in order to prevent me from leaving Bhatkal and in order to make Anasuyakka, Dr. Rama Rao and Sundari not to love me, was going to a sorcerer and bringing from him something infusing into it an evil power. So the correspondence from Sundari gradually lessened. I did not know anything about this at that time.

O infinite Papa! It was a well known fact that every time I went to my mother's house, this uncle of mine was always putting obstacles in the way of my going back to Bombay. I would stay normally at my mother's house for not less than a week and not more than a month every time, whereas this time I was obliged to stay there for about five months. I could not bear with patience any more the trouble I was subjected to by this uncle and I did not mind even if my delivery took place in the streets. I went to the length of even going away alone from the house for about a furlong. The people in the house were all frightened and my maternal grandmother came running to me and assured me, "In future we will not do anything to displease you." So I returned to the house. From that time, however naughty Ganesh and Narayan were, nobody in the house interfered with them. If any one spoke disparagingly about my husband, children or me, I would get furious like a tigress. As a result, nobody in the house would raise a voice about me one way or the other.

O Papa, the very ocean of compassion! On account of the intolerable harshness of the uncle and the grief due to the passing away of my husband, I wished for a premature delivery. With this object I started eating all kinds of hot and pungent foods. It so happened that the female child that was born died within a month.

Two months after my delivery when I started with Anasuyakka to go to Belgaum, it was not possible for me to catch the steamer and we had to return home from the port. From this I came to know of the secret work of my uncle. He called me once to his room with a view to speak to me about something. Truly, I had no mind to go to his room, but my mother told me there was nothing to fear and she would also be there, and so I consented. When I went inside his room I found something in his hand. I suddenly came out fearing that he was about to do some evil to me. Then I remembered all the happenings in the past brought about by him by the power of Mantras.

O blissful Papa! When I was in Bhatkal I came to know the real nature of my uncle from my acquaintances also. He was a drunkard. Besides, he used to boast that he was maintaining the family by earning money with the sweat of his brow. In fact, this was false. During his life-time my father had given to some people loans of about thirty thousand rupees. He in his turn had borrowed from other parties about the same amount. As father's debtors after his death returned the money loaned out to them and some of his creditors did not claim their money borrowed by my father, we had enough funds for our maintenance. But he made us believe that we were in poverty. No doubt, my uncle who had left his job was exerting himself in recovering from the debtors the money they owed to my father. But he was using a good part of it for his vices. So the household was run with great difficulty.

O compassionate Papa! Anasuyakka came to take me to Belgaum. Then my maternal uncle tried to persuade me through Anasuyakka to stay in Bhatkal only. But as I did not agree I started to go with children in the company of Anasuyakka and also Shanti who was to go to Bombay. In a disturbed mood I made a resolution that after leaving Ganesh and Narayan in the care of Dr. Rama Rao, as soon as I got down from the steamboat at Goa, I would jump into the sea and put an end to my life. But by your will, as the attention of both Dr. Rama Rao, who had come to receive me, and Shanti was on me, it was not possible to carry out my plan.

O merciful Papa! I had profound attachment for my relatives on my mother's side, and among them I had a kind of veneration for the maternal uncle. It was indeed difficult to free me from this maze of attachment. Compassionate as you are, making them play a crooked game in various ways you liberated me from the bonds of my attachment for them. You enabled me thus at a future date to realize my oneness with your eternal Being.

O all-pervading Papa! Dr. Rama Rao and his wife Sundari were tending me and my children, when we were in their house, with all love as they treated their own children. Those who observed the love they showered on Ganesh and Narayan would have found it difficult to make out the difference between their children and mine. Sundari's daughter Indu was very fond of me, so much so that when I was with her she would not feel the absence of her own mother. But she would be upset if I were not with her. When I was chanting Ramnam she would quietly sleep on my lap for a long time.

O all-pervading Papa! In this manner I spent about eight years in their house, loved by all as if we really belonged to one united family. The education of Ganesh and Narayan was gone through by their help only. Even to this day Ganesh and Narayan are loved and protected with care by them.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

About Saints

O LOVE-INCARNATE PAPA! The company of Dr. Rama Rao and Sundari helped me a great deal in attaining my oneness with your infinite Being and the resultant immortal bliss. As Dr. Rama Rao had to go to foreign countries, Sundari came to Kasaragod along with me and children to reside in her parent's house. It was here that I obtained your Darshan.

O Papa who is pervading the entire universe! When I first came to you with Sundari I was thinking that the family members alone were mine. Then you taught me how to love the whole universe, while residing in the house. Thereafter, when I remained with you always, freeing me from body-consciousness, you gave me the realization that I was the universe itself, and the consciousness of my oneness with you. As I describe all the different good or defective parts of my body as 'I' and 'mine', in the same way when I realize the whole universe is 'I', I describe the good and bad qualities I see in it as 'I' and 'mine'.

O Purushottam Papa! Just as I was looking after the needs of my body and providing it with whatever was necessary at regular hours, though at first I felt that the body was myself from head to foot while really I was different from it, similarly even knowing that I am the entire universe and also beyond it, having the awareness that I am one with your omnipresent Being, whenever occasion arises I perform the service of all people taking them as 'I' and 'mine'. O Papa, manifesting yourself as the cosmos and playing in various ways, you are still changeless and transcendent. Victory to you! Victory to you! Victory to you!

O Papa, the giver of bliss! From my childhood I was afraid of Sadhus and saints. When we were living in Haliyal, a saint was coming to our house. He had a long beard and moustaches and I used to tremble with fear whenever I saw him. He was a hot tempered person. He was orthodox in his ways and if children touched him after his bath he would fly into a rage and frighten them. So we were afraid to approach him.

O all-pervading Papa! When I was about twelve years old I had gone to Bhatkal. Here at that time a saint had come to Nadgar Temple. Whenever I saw a saint, whoever he might be, I would question my elders, "Why do you call him a saint? Why do they think of God? Why does God love them so much? Why are people doing Namaskars to them? Why should people become their disciples? Particularly I want to know why women become their disciples." In this manner I would ask questions like a pouring rain. To this the elders would reply, "A saint is God Himself. Because they are always remembering God, He has great love for them. One should not have any doubts about them. If you speak ill of a saint, you commit sin and have to go to hell." Then I would immediately ask, "What do you mean by hell?" Then they would say, "The messengers of Yama would throw those who commit sin into hell and give them dire punishment." To confirm what they said, they would show pictures depicting how a soul which committed sins suffered. Consequently whenever any disparaging thought about saints came to me, I would feel a sense of fear and try my best to forget that thought.

O universally-pervading Papa! Even then, sometimes when the elders talked among themselves about certain happenings in relation to saints, their words would fall into my ears. The saint who had come to Bhatkal was getting his disciples under his power and was treating them harshly. He would tell them, "When a Guru says in the day that it is night, and in the night that it is day, the disciple should implicitly agree to it. The persecution by the Guru should not be considered by the disciple as persecution. If you have any doubt about the Guru you are sure to go to hell." In this way he was in strong words, instructing his disciples. He was also giving no end of trouble to his female disciples. After waving Arati before the deity he would place the hot plate of the Arati on their thighs. Still the disciples would patiently bear the pain inflicted by him, having in view the one aspiration to have the Darshan of God. After coming to know all about this I was afraid of saints. If you happened to come in the forms of these saints to the temple I would flee from there.

O Papa who is an ocean of grace! By the time I reached the age of twenty-five I had heard about many saints of this type. The reports about them produced in my heart a feeling of disgust for them. Fearing that by harbouring such thoughts I might be committing a sin, I would try my best to keep away such thoughts. The more I was afraid of bad thoughts about them, the more I used to hear from my elders about their unrighteous ways. If any one praised a certain saint, after he got up and left the place, another would come and, sitting in the same place, speak of evil doings of the same saint. Listening to all these talks I felt that I should not have either reverence or irreverence for saints. I was afraid, if I conceived veneration for them I might go to them and get entangled in their net. Therefore, whenever I saw Sadhus or saints, without going near them I would do Namaskar to them from a distance.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Trials of a Woman

O BLISSFUL PAPA! I CAME to believe that those who pose as saints, instead of living an unrighteous life in the garb of Sannyasis and getting women under their control and following the path of Adharma, would do better if they lived a normal worldly life.

O compassionate Papa! From my childhood I had seen several such saints. Instead of seeing in them, as described in books, equal vision, absence of attachment, no desire to accumulate wealth, and such other qualities, I found they were a prey to frailties such as like and dislike, and they lived an objectionable life worse than those who were involved in worldly life.

O Papa, the ocean of kindness! In my eighteenth year I had received initiation of a Mantra from Sri Tammanna Sastri, a disciple of Sri Gondavali Maharaj. Although this saint was worthy of reverence, I was afraid of talking to him familiarly. I felt at the time that it was enough for me to do the Japa remaining at home; even if I did not get the Darshan of God, I should see that my honour was safeguarded.

O kindness-incarnate Papa! In order to free my mind from these doubts about saints which I harboured in my mind from girlhood, you brought me to the Ashram of Sri Siddharudha Swami. Although Sri Siddharudha Swami was carefully accumulating wealth, I had intense devotion and reverence for him.

You converted me into an innocent child and dispelled all my doubts.

O all-pervading Papa! Thus you liberated me from the maze of doubts in order to absorb me into your eternal Being, and with a view to bring about this fulfilment you placed me in such a situation that it might be termed as between the devil and the deep sea. My position was this: If I remained in the house I would be pursued by a perverted G.S. and I had to struggle for the protection of my chastity. On the other hand, if I left the house I was afraid of facing ruin by falling into the trap of unprincipled men.

O love-incarnate Papa! Now realising that it was impossible for me to safeguard my physical purity while remaining at home, placing all my faith in you, I mentally renounced the house and started coming to you. From that day G.S. could not in any way molest me. As I had surrendered myself completely to you I became free from all anxiety, just as a child would feel in the arms of its mother.

O omnipresent Papa! Before I renounced the house, the moment I thought of such a renunciation I reflected what would be my fate if I could not protect my chastity even after I came to you. Having come to know of my state of mind, you spoke to the devotees who were sitting around you, "If you wish to accept Ramdas as your Guru, you should test him well before doing so." In this way you dispelled the doubts that were arising in my mind.

O Papa, the lover of devotees! Ultimately I renounced the household life. By my remaining with you, you were subjected to adverse criticism from the people, but compassionate as you were, you granted me the realization of your immortal Being and removed totally from my mind all bad thoughts about so-called Mahatmas and also the fear of my being led astray by their contact, and thereby made me eternally happy.

O all-pervading Papa! After I realized your real Being and during the time I was carrying on my acts of service in Anandashram here, G.S. came here also. I was under the impression that he must have given up his bad habits, but some people who travelled with him in the same steamboat told me about his ways. Seeing that he had still not freed himself from his bad ways, I got excessively angry and in your presence I spoke to him in stinging and contemptuous words. I told him that he should not in future step into the Ashram and I further asked his friend in whose company he came, not to bring this person when he came here next time. From that time we have no news of G.S.

O Purushottam Papa! When you wished to bring me into the world you gave me birth as a female, and therefore you put me in the bondage of being always under the shelter of others. Moreover, you did not give me any education, nor had I any desire for learning in order to eke out my livelihood independently. On the contrary, when I was still young, you made me experience the happiness and suffering of worldly life, gave me children and also widowhood. In the case of widows, it is difficult for them to maintain themselves and to protect their physical purity. But how was it possible for one like me to live a life encumbered with children under the care of others? However, you granted me the good fortune to live under the shelter of relatives like Dr. Rama Rao and Sundari who were to me like my own father and mother.

O Papa who is everywhere and yet transcendent! Keeping in view the prospect of merging myself soon into your infinite Being, I underwent with patience all bitterness and sufferings in my life. Furthermore, I became also the victim of persecution of evil-minded and carnally mad people. But after I received the Guru Mantra from you and coming under your refuge, howsoever much people tried to dishonour me, protector of the helpless as you are, you saved me from the annoyance of such people.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

How You Saved Me

O ALL-LOVING PAPA! WHEN I was going alone to the Kasaragod Anandashram along the pathway on the hill, some people, who were you in those forms, used to await my coming for molesting me. When I saw them from a distance, taking them as yourself, I mentally prayed to them, with the consequence that you dispelled their thoughts of giving me any trouble. They could not even come near me.

O Papa, the lover of devotees! With the object of uprooting my attachment to the world, you were assuming various forms to persecute me. You were also, in those forms, slandering me and looking upon me with contempt.

O Papa, the ocean of compassion! When you were away to Northern India on tour, one day in the morning, as it was usual with me to visit the houses, I started earlier than before and directly went towards those houses. But that day no one in your form talked to me lovingly. As they treated me with indifference I marched on the road on and on and reached at 11 a.m. a house at a distance of three miles. The people of the house had gone to attend to their work in schools, so there was only an old woman in it. She welcomed me with all love and gave me some water and a piece of jaggery. I accepted the water with joy as I was walking about since morning and was tired and had had no food. So I sat quietly. Meanwhile, the old woman, who was your form, spreading a mat on the floor in a room, asked me to take rest for relief from fatigue. Immediately I did as bid by her and slept soundly in complete forgetfulness of the external world.

O love-incarnate Papa! Some time later, the residents of the house came. They heated some water for bath and cooked food and woke me up from sleep. As I had some rest I got up refreshed and finishing my bath took meals served by them. I talked with them for some time about you. Then I, who had been away from Sundari's house from morning, returned to it in the evening, when the lamps were lit. The moment Sundari saw me, she asked me, "Did you not go to the Ashram where continuous Bhajan was held today? About four or five persons came in search of you." But I did not know of the continuous Bhajan, so I told her, "I went on a visit to some houses and I am just returning."

O compassionate Papa! Through some friends I came to know later that the Akhanda Bhajan was arranged by some persons solely with the idea of disgracing me, as they knew that I would attend any Bhajan held in the Ashram when you were there. One of them, who was of course your form, had taken a vow to bring dishonour to me. But since I had dedicated my mind and body to you and had become your small child it behoved you to protect me in every way.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

Guru and Disciples

O PAPA, THE BESTOWER OF bliss! In order to realize your supreme Self, you at first lived the life of a worldly man and then remaining in it you remembered God, and only after the experience that your family and the universe were one was stabilized, you renounced your house and passed through various struggles and tribulations. Similarly, you made me remain in the family and granted me the vision that the universe itself was mine and to go from one place to another was to go from one room to another in the same house. It was after I attained this stage you inspired me from within to renounce my house. Also you tested me by bringing into my life innumerable trials and difficulties. Compassionate as you are, without my being fully conscious, you made me pass through all adverse situations and then merged me into your eternal Being.

O gracious Papa! After great struggles I became one with your Being. Still as I was a woman and people saw me in your company, they entertained suspicion about you, who are so pure and worshipful. The joy which would have welled up in their hearts by your Darshan failed the moment they saw me with you. I had believed that by my staying with you it would prove helpful for people to realize your immortal Being. But my association with you produced entirely a different result, with the consequence that many devotees did not make any progress in their Sadhana to experience their oneness with you. Therefore, I did not accompany you during your tours from 1936 to 1938. But as you were advanced in age, your health suffered and in order to take care of your body I had to accompany you on the later tours. On account of this, the minds of men constricted and I was pained at heart to see that their progress towards the attainment of your eternal Being was hampered.

O all-pervading Papa! If the people who came to you were blessed by you with a keen desire to realize your eternal Being, looking upon you as mother of the universe and themselves as little children, they would not have seen in you any kind of blemish.

O Purushottam Papa! When you created the world, you brought into being countless animate and inanimate beings. There are innumerable creatures which are not within our knowledge, and you have placed the human race at the head of creation, giving them the power of reason and feeling, so that they may be able to procure what they want. In order to carry out your creative activities, you have implanted in the hearts of the majority of them a desire to enjoy ephemeral pleasures instead of an aspiration for eternal happiness.

O omnipresent Papa! With the object of giving these people eternal happiness you have, assuming the form of Gurus, established Maths, Ashrams and temples and bound them by the restrictions of caste, sect, etc. Just as the mother protects the child from going astray by setting limitations on it, so also, changeless, formless and motionless Truth as you are, you have assumed the human form of Guru and are protecting everybody by instituting rules and regulations so that they can easily merge themselves into your eternal Being.

O universal Papa! Having manifested yourself in Maths, Ashrams and temples, you have made unshakable the faith of those who approach you with devotion and love, by fulfilling their physical and mental needs. When they come to you with the aspiration for attaining immortal happiness even that you give them.

O Papa, the giver of bliss! In order to enable them to love the entire universe, you have manifested yourself in the forms of Guru in different communities to teach them first to love their relatives and then their community. So their love for the family and community would therefrom expand and unconsciously encircle the town and the state. In this manner, when it takes a still wider range, you teach them to love the entire universe. In this manner, teaching them to love the whole universe, you absorb them into your infinite Being, and thereafter grant them also the awareness that they are not only the universe but also beyond it.

O beginningless and endless Papa! Why have you established Maths, temples and Ashrams? Who is a Guru and a saint? As you prompted me to think on these lines, I was subjected to many doubts about them from childhood. Saraswatiakka, my cousin, was living in the Bhatkal Nadgar Temple. You, in her form, were loving her disciples more than her family members. I was feeling why this should happen. Moreover, Srimat Pandurangashram Swami, who is yourself, when giving Tirtha, was being offered money by the devotees. Why should they offer him money? Why should he receive it and also the yearly tithe? These questions were also rising in my mind. When I asked the elders about these matters, they replied, "The Swamiji is receiving money from us for our uplift. If we give him money we obtain devotion for God. Besides, we are blessed with health, progeny and prosperity." Thus, my doubts having disappeared, my reverence for him remained firm. Now I have understood that what Saraswatiakka did was right. As it is the nature of the eye to look more and more at things that please it, and the ear to hear more and more the sounds that please it, so also it is the nature of the family man to love his own family members more than others, and it is the nature of the Gurus and gods to love their disciples and devotees more than others as they are pleased and drawn towards them (disciples and devotees) by their love and devotion.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

Self-Surrender

O INFINITE PAPA! WHEN I was a child, yourself in the form of my father used to say, whenever he helped his relatives, "By your command." I could not at the time understand the meaning of the word "command". But when I grew up and went to Srimat Pandurangashram Swami, who is your form, I observed all people who came to see him were using this word out of respect for him. It is possible that my father was also using this word, when he went for the Darshan of Srimat Pandurangashram Swami, out of respect for him.

Srimat Pandurangashram Swami treated all members of the community of which he was the spiritual head with love as a father would his own children. In the same manner my father was helping, as much as possible, his poor and helpless relatives as his own children until they were able to stand on their own legs.

O ocean of kindness! The love that my father learnt through Srimat Pandurangashram Swami was extended not merely to his relatives but also to the guests and the paid servants in the house. For example, in our house then there was a servant by name Buddhiya, belonging to Buddha's religion, engaged for bringing water from the well for the use of the house. When father saw Buddhiya tired after his work was over, he would pat him on the back and ask him, "Are you very much tired?" And he talked to him with all tenderness and love. In those days usually the servants were not treated well. When my father spoke to them lovingly, their fatigue would go and they would feel happy. Whenever I saw father speaking to anybody with love, my joy would be boundless. So I was very keenly watching his way of treating the servants and also the visitors who came to his house. My observation of father's loving nature helped me in my internal progress and elevation.

O Papa, the ocean of grace! Even after paying the visit to the Math of Sri Siddharudha Swami I did not give up my doubts about his accumulation of wealth or about the saints having more love for one and less for another. As my mind had become just like that of a child, the moment I came in your presence, love and reverence automatically sprang up in my heart. Even then, sometimes when I saw you in the form of saints, I was troubled by these doubts about them. Therefore, I was not able to find out the meaning of saints' lives. Although I had love for them, yet I was afraid of them.

O all-pervading Papa! Gradually increasing in my heart the power of love in order to dispel my doubts, you drew me to yourself. At the time, you were free from anger and had no attachment for anything. You had also no habit of storing up things. Whenever I brought to you eatables or clothes from Sundari, you were no doubt accepting them, but next time I came to you you were not in possession of them. You were preaching, "You ought to see Ram in both good and evil. He is in both and also beyond both. He is without beginning and end. He is static, immutable, omnipresent, immanent and transcendent. He is ever immutable and also ever changing. The embodiment of love is He. The embodiment of hate is also He. Yet He is beyond both. Therefore, whether we see good or evil, we ought to see Ram in both. In all bodies and forms the player is He." This is what you taught and

I was thrown into confusion. I could not make out the meaning of what you said, "One should have both good and bad in him, and also he must be beyond both as otherwise he cannot be complete or perfect." But I saw very little of bad in you. Besides, in the saints I met, even though it be for raising us, they had the nature of accumulating things and also they were giving themselves away to wrath. But I found that you were lacking in these qualities. Then in whom should I have faith? From whom should I keep away?

O compassionate Papa! Feeling that if I remained entangled in these doubts I would not be able to realize the state beyond the pairs of opposites, you in so many forms, pestered me with a view to break my vow of chastity and thus you paved the way for me to come out from the fetters of the household life. Understanding that if I got entrapped in the pairs of opposites, my state would be like that of one who stood with his each foot in a separate boat, I decided to follow your advice and go forward on the path. Now whenever the opposites confused me I placed the matter before you. Then in consoling words you told me, "Without stoppage do the Japa of Ramnam. If the pairs of opposites harass you, take them as Ram Himself." In this way, as I marched on the path, I attained the experience that you pervaded all beings and also dwelt in me. Then in my heart awakened perfect love for you.

O Papa, the giver of bliss! Thus by augmenting my love for you, you made me one with your omnipresent and transcendent Being, followed by the experience that I am the whole universe and also beyond it. Now I came to know the secret of the pairs of opposites which held me in their clutches almost from my birth.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

Anandashram Life

O PAPA WHO IS THE ENTIRE universe and beyond! Now in my dynamic being I am maintaining with you the relationship as that of a child towards its mother, but without any sense of duality. While in body-consciousness, *i.e.*, before realization, I did not feel any sense of duality between myself and the different parts of my body when I said, "my hands, my legs, etc." So also now after realizing that I am the entire universe and beyond it I consider you as my Universal Mother even though you and I are one. Whoever did anything right, you were the inspirer. Whoever did anything wrong, there again you were the inspirer. But I did not know this before I became one with your immortal Being. I have given ere this the names of those who did right and those who did wrong. At this stage I feel I should not mention anybody's name except yours and mine while narrating further all the events that happened from the time we started the activities of Anandashram.

O Papa, the embodiment of compassion! In order to begin the work of universal love and universal service, in 1931 on May 15th you started Anandashram near Kanhangad. The opening celebration of the Ashram was held with great eclat.

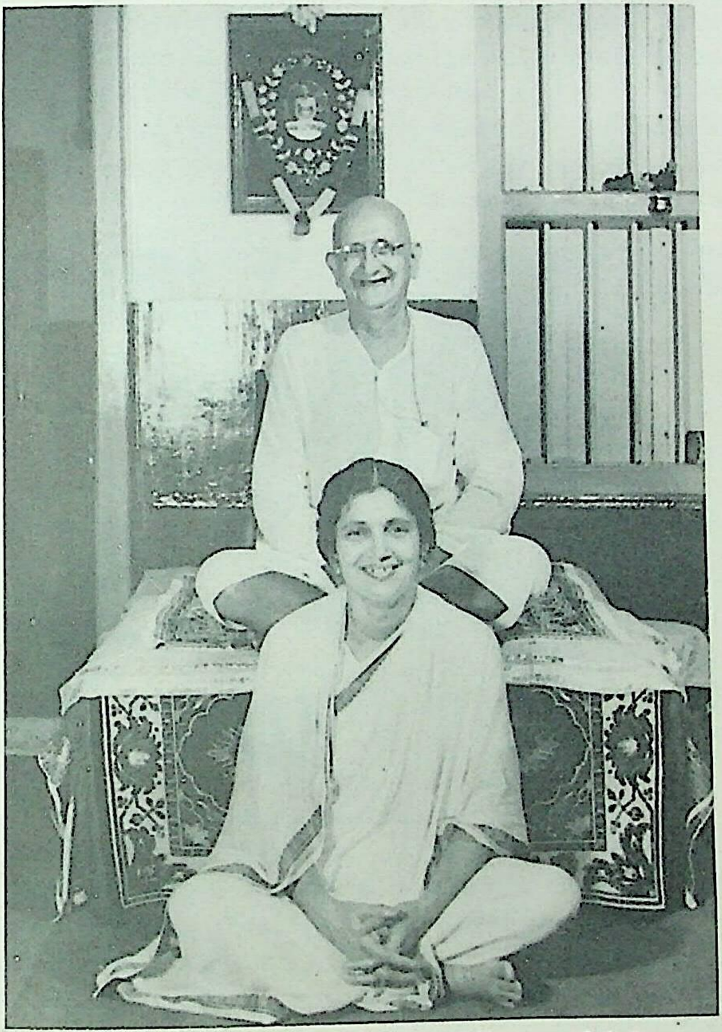
O universal Papa! When you were making me do all the necessary Sadhana for merging me in your eternal Being, for the protection of my body and for the enlightenment of my mind, you alone were doing everything necessary for me. When you were starting the work of the Ashram, whoever came with the sole object of realizing your immortal Being, it was my wish that the task of both protecting his body and purifying his mind should not entirely rest on your shoulders and that I should be helpful to you in looking after their physical needs and that you should have only the work of raising them for the realization of your eternal Self.

O love-incarnate Papa! With this aim at the start you instituted a programme of one hour's Bhajan in the morning and one hour's Bhajan in the evening. Besides, if any devotees came to the Ashram for performing Bhajan, you suggested to them to have their Bhajan at other times. Moreover, you fixed up the reading of scriptures for one hour in the day and one hour in the night. At other times you were discoursing on what all Sadhanas one should do to attain Self-realization and how one should face obstacles on the path. In the course of the talk you would quote appropriate examples. You in the form of many devotees came to the Ashram with a strong desire to realize their oneness with your eternal Being. Most of the devotees in the same village in which the Ashram stands and also from nearby towns were coming to the Ashram. Again you in the form of some young men who lived in far off places gave up their employment and joined the Ashram as Sadhakas.

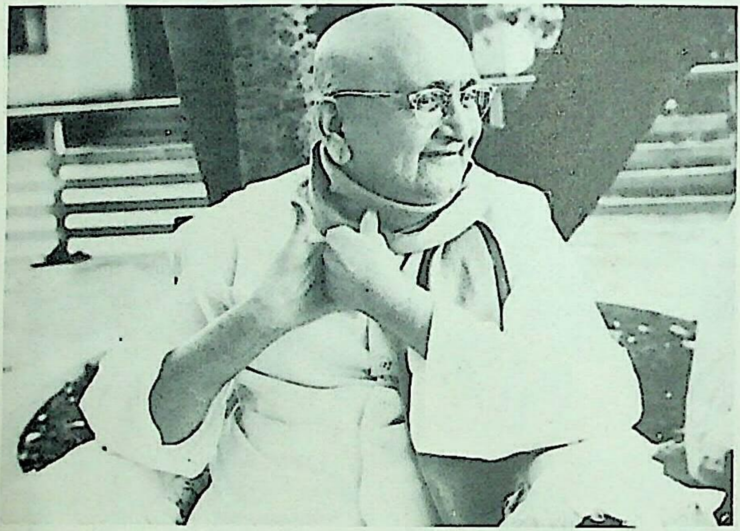
O omnipresent Papa! At this time for our food we used to have in the morning coffee and eatables, and in the noon conjee and a curry. We were cooking these eatables in earthen vessels. In the night we used to take diluted milk and any fruits, if available. If we had no fruits we would prepare some eatable. All the Ashram work was done by the inmates. Those who came as visitors from distant places had to do their own work and if time permitted they rendered service to the Ashram.

O Papa, the giver of bliss! In this manner, having arranged for the work of the body and mind, you in the form of the Sadhakas progressed rapidly on the spiritual path and so their minds had a great uplift. They were fully satisfied with all that we did for them, and they were listening to your spiritual advice with faith and enthusiasm, and thereby they advanced on the path rapidly. You gave them a strong aspiration to realize your eternal Being in this birth itself. As they listened to your words their hearts were flooded with joy. In your presence they would experience an indescribable bliss. They were listening with attention to your words, sitting for Bhajan, doing Sadhana and rendering service to you in various ways without being tired and with all earnestness. So as days passed, you made their minds rise to higher and higher planes.

O peaceful Papa! Now it so happened you in the forms of several people of this village and other places spread false reports regarding your sudden abandonment of Kasaragod Ashram, which gradually fell into the ears of the Sadhakas, as they went on Ashram work to Mangalore or other places and happened to be in the company of these persons who were spreading such rumours. Although you in the forms of these Sadhakas had known all that had happened in Kasaragod Ashram, as they were keen on realizing their oneness with the eternal Being, what they had heard did not affect them at first so much. Now as you had made their minds pure as a result of their Sadhana, when they heard these reports their minds became gradually impure just as when a colour is mixed in pure and sparkling water. You did not enable them to see you in both good and evil. Their minds became defiled because you made them see you only in the good and not in the evil. Thus you made them forget with what purpose they came to the Ashram, giving up their families, and what



Mother Krishnabai with our All-merciful Papa



Our Beloved Purushottama Papa

they should principally do. The mind does not rise as rapidly as it falls down. Their minds which you had to some extent made to ascend to higher planes of consciousness were brought down by you in a short time. Till then you were making them do all work with enthusiasm, seeing greatness in all that we did and setting a high value on them. Now you made them find in our same activities faults and shortcomings. Whatever we did for them was looked upon with disfavour.

O all-pervading Papa! In spite of this, you inspired the Sadhaks to treat you with love and reverence. You were found always in their company giving them advice for their spiritual advancement. As for me, I was serving the Sadhakas with the same love with which I served you. But just as eating more food than necessary results in indigestion and illness, similarly you made my unstinted service rendered to them and my over-kindness to them, bring about their fall instead of raising their minds. There was one among the young Sadhakas whose mind had dropped to such a degree that he was found always going with women. Noticing this, I taunted him so that he might walk on the right path. You also became aware of his behaviour and suggested, for his benefit, that he might live in solitude and so arranged for his stay for Sadhana in a house near the Ashram. Even then, when you found that he was not improved, you had to send him away from the Ashram.

O infinite Papa! When you discovered that the minds of the Sadhakas, instead of improving, were day by day descending to levels lower than what they were when they first came to the Ashram, you thought that it was not possible for the mind once involved in the world to turn inward easily. So you started publication of the monthly magazines: *The Vision* in English and *Vishwa Prem* in Marathi, so that the mind may be given also some external work side by side with Bhajan, meditation, etc., as a help to Sadhana. In order to work out this idea, you got from a devotee the necessary amount for constructing a small office building. The main aim of these monthly magazines was to spread the ideals of universal love and service. In these magazines were published articles on spiritual subjects written by yourself and other Mahatmas who were your forms.

O Papa, the lover of the humble! When I saw that you, dwelling in the hearts of the Sadhakas living in the Ashram, were taking their minds downward, I felt immensely pained at heart. I was doing all acts of service with great zeal and enthusiasm, believing that the Sadhakas would be benefited for attaining oneness with your real Being, just as I attained the same state. But my enthusiasm cooled down when I observed many untoward situations and happenings. Then I reflected, "What is the use of an Ashram if it does not prevent the minds of the Sadhakas living in it from pursuing transitory pleasures? You have provided these people at their homes with the necessary things for enjoyment of worldly pleasures. They can have this enjoyment remaining in their places." So I felt there was no need to have any Ashram at all.

CHAPTER THIRTY

The Ashram Grows

O SADGURU PAPA! THEN I remembered your words in this connection, "You achieve victory only when you fight from a fort but not when you are fighting in the open plains." This is perfectly true. I had remained at home and was coming to you now and then and doing Sadhana. So it became possible for me to attain the goal. Because, you gave me when living in the world, such a strength of mind that the public slander and mockery did not touch me, and you made me do only such work as would enable me to realize your eternal Being. But you had made these Sadhakas renounce their homes as soon as you gave them the aspiration to realize you and so they were fighting in the open spaces. Therefore they met with defeat. If you had prompted them to renounce the house only after knowing that the house and the universe are one, they would certainly have attained success. So I felt that it would be beneficial to the Sadhakas to come and stay with us for some time and after learning the ways of Sadhana for spiritual realization, go home and remember you constantly.

O Papa, protector of devotees! I came to know you were enacting all this play, in order to give me experience. So unless you choose to reveal yourself in anybody, it is not possible for him or her by mere pressure from others to be absorbed in your eternal Being.

O compassionate Papa! Therefore, I did not at all wish that the Ashram should grow and expand more and more. If anybody talked about the expansion of the Ashram I was getting angry. Even when you planted a seedling in the Ashram grounds, I was opposing you. Because, when the Ashram takes a wider form and trees grow up in it, it would not be possible for us to do all the work of looking after them and we might have to engage paid workers for it. If we appointed such workers we would have to pay them wages. This would again be not possible for us and thus without gaining any benefit we would be burdened with debts. Besides, if we expanded the activities of the Ashram, the devotees who are sending monetary help to the Ashram would think why we, who have renounced everything, should take up activities of this nature. The ultimate result would be that their faith in us would wither away.

O Papa, the giver of peace! When devotees offer you with reverence money and other things looking upon you as Guru or God, such offering will be conducive to their spiritual uplift. When you give away such moneys and things to others who are for you none other than Ram himself, they will also be benefited spiritually by receiving such gifts from you if they look upon you with reverence. 'Blessed is he who gives and blessed is he who receives.'

O Papa, who pervades everywhere! In spite of my arguing with you to the contrary, the Ashram automatically went on expanding. When I was absorbed in some other kind of work in the Ashram, if anybody came with plants and offered to set them in the Ashram grounds, you, who are fond of gardening, would agree to it. Seeing your zeal I would remain quiet. In this way, friends came one by one and planted all kinds of seedling in the Ashram compound, which was really to your liking. Of the plants there were flower plants and plants of mango, jack fruit, coconut, cashewnut and other kinds of fruits.

O all-pervading Papa! Many of your devotees were coming to the Ashram from various parts of India and abroad. Since there was no proper arrangement for their stay, they could spend here only a day or two and that too with difficulty. Therefore, you from within prompted some of the rich among them to propose to construct at their cost, guest houses for their use when they came to the Ashram and at other times for the use of other visitors. It was not possible for you to refuse this offer. Ere this, when I told you not to expand the scope of the Ashram you had agreed. You are the mother of all your children in the world, and as such you could not but fulfil their wishes. Besides, many householders, who are your forms, told you that they gained much peace when they stayed in the Ashram, and also informed you by letters that on their return many changes for the better had taken place in their lives. So I consented to their proposal so that the householders and the Sadhakas who could spend some days with us might be benefited. So buildings came up one after the other and became useful and convenient for the visitors who came here for a few days.

O Papa, the ocean of compassion! Thus as the number of people coming to the Ashram increased, their children used to cry for milk in the mornings. The Ashram could not provide them with milk when they wanted it. As we had to get the milk from a distance of three miles, the milk would reach the Ashram only by about 8.30 in the morning. All the devotees in the Ashram used to be tired of waiting for it. It caused you also a good deal of trouble. Now, you in the form of a local devotee came forward to present the Ashram with cows and also offered to build a cow-shed for their accommodation. Although we were against the idea of expanding the Ashram, yet owing to unavoidable causes, we had to fall in with his views. Consequently he built a cow-shed and gave us two cows, of which one was a milch cow with a calf. Thereafter you in the form of another devotee dedicated to the Ashram a cow and a calf and also a she-buffalo. We also purchased a cow and a she-buffalo. In course of time, as the number of cows multiplied we planned to increase the space area of the cow-shed. When the number of cattle further increased, we had to construct a big Goshala. Now the number of cattle has risen to seventy, of which some are bulls and buffaloes and the rest cows and calves. We have since been selling bulls and also giving away as gift a number of she-calves and bulls to deserving persons.

O all-pervading Papa! At the beginning the Ashram had no electric lights. As the visitors increased in number and there was trouble from snakes wandering in the Ashram compound, we had to use petromaxes instead of kerosene lanterns. Even these not having served the purpose, some devotees proposed to have an electric plant installed for electrifying the streets and the Ashram houses, and we gave our consent. So, now as there are electric lights, devotees can freely walk about in the nights on the roads inside the Ashram compound. Moreover, because of the electric power we can work the water pumps for supplying water to the Ashram buildings, and a flour mill for making flour from rice and wheat. These machines were presented to the Ashram by some devotees. Now electric power is being supplied by the Government.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

Celebrations

O PAPA, THE ENDLESS AND beginningless! Now during the first four years the Ashram had four celebrations each year. We started with a celebration on the Anniversary of the inauguration of the Ashram. This celebration extended for seven days. As it was observed on the 15th of May each year, on account of heavy rains in this month it involved great hardship to the huge concourse of visitors. At the suggestion of yourself in the form of a devotee, instead of the 15th May, the Ashram started celebrating Hanuman Jayanti day which was your birthday and it fell in the month of April. We also celebrated the Punya Tithi of Gurudev which falls on Naraka Chaturdashi usually in October. In December, many devotees were coming to the Ashram during the Christmas holidays and so another celebration was held on the 27th December which is your Sannyas day. While these three celebrations were held, at the pressure of the devotees you agreed to have one more celebration on the Mahalaya Amavasya day which is my birthday.

O kindness incarnate Papa! In the beginning we used to have your birthday celebration for seven days and other celebrations for three days. Later we reduced these to three days and one day respectively. During the celebrations we would have non-stop Bhajan, Harikatha and other programmes, and feast for the visitors and the poor people. For carrying out these items in the programme, devotees who are your forms, provided us with the necessary funds.

O Papa, the lover of the humble! From the start I had no interest in holding these celebrations. But owing to your wish and of others who were your forms, we had to observe these celebrations. Our object was not to make a grand show of them but to help the devotees in their spiritual uplift and ultimate realization of your infinite Being. In the days of celebration, naturally there should be a great zeal in the minds of devotees to chant Ramnam more and more so that they might enjoy the bliss of the Eternal. On the contrary, as years passed we noticed that very few people derived real benefit by the celebrations and they started finding fault with us in all our actions.

O omnipresent Papa! It was natural that they found fault with us because you dwelling in them were making them believe that they were merely the bodies. Usually they put the stock question, "They say all are the same to the saints, they are said to be free from like and dislike. Then why do they exhibit partiality and differential treatment?" But they do not know the meaning of it all. So there is nothing wrong when they see blemishes in us. Even then, in my opinion, what we did was right as we had the experience of our identity with the entire universe and also the Truth beyond it. For example, even though the whole body is considered as myself I cannot touch with the same hand at the same time my head and my leg, so also, even though I know the entire universe is myself I cannot serve all beings at once. Though with our own eyes we cannot see at once all parts of our body, still our equality in regard to the body is not thereby affected. Similarly after we have realized the universe as ourselves, we can see only some and not others, but the sense of equality in us remains intact.

O Papa, the protector of devotees! You were coming to the

Ashram also in the forms of some mischief-mongers. They would wander about in the Ashram compound, gaze at women and make fun of them. Of these there was one Sadhu who was known as a Mahatma and who was of course your own form. At one of the celebrations he came in the company of some devotees and called himself Krishna. He would eat the food prepared for or served to children, beat children, smile at women and do such other acts. Gradually he started sitting in the midst of women and was often beating them. When you observed this behaviour of his, you remained quiet for two days. As his conduct became intolerable, you decided to send him away from the Ashram. Scenting what was going to happen to him, the Sadhu bolted himself in a room and commenced shaving his beard with the shaving set of a visitor. Now you knocked at the door and asked him to open it. But he did not care to act up to your words; so you pushed the door. Still he did not come out. You sat down waiting for him at the door. Some time later, finishing his work the Sadhu came out. You told him, "Calling yourself Krishna what is this you are doing? Ramdas is not going to allow you to carry on like this." So you pushed him out and asked him to leave the Ashram, but as he did not move, you gave him a kick and asked him to clear out of the gate. Beholding you in a state of rage, we were all frightened. We wished that you should soon regain your usual composure, but you had no rest until the so-called Sadhu was driven clean out of the Ashram premises.

O Papa, the giver of bliss! I know that you kicked him not out of hate or dislike for him, but with a view to lead him on the right path. In the eyes of the people who were present, this act of yours appeared to be improper, but truly there was nothing wrong in what you did. Just as a man suffering from a serious illness, to be free from it, gives himself over to the surgeon in the case of an operation and undergoes thereby all kinds of pains, similarly having pervaded the entire universe and knowing that you are the universe itself, in order to heal the pains in your own body you inflict suffering on yourself. After this incident you had no occasion to punish anybody as you had in the case of that Sadhu, but often you had, by threats, to eject some incorrigible people from the Ashram.

O Papa, the ocean of kindness! Since the majority of your forms coming to the Ashram were not for gaining real and lasting happiness but to enjoy transitory pleasures, I argued with you that we would do well to put a stop to the celebrations. Moreover from year to year as the number of people who attended the celebrations increased, we had to undergo immense strain from the huge work to be turned out on such occasions. Prior to this we had not in the Ashram big vessels to prepare food and we had to borrow them from the local temple. When I suggested to you that we might buy such vessels for the Ashram use, you were not in favour of doing so.

O compassionate Papa! Once when the Ashram celebration approached and at the same time there were marriages in certain houses, the vessels of the temple which we used to borrow were requisitioned by the marriage parties. So the Ashram had to face untold difficulties. On this point I started an acute controversy with you. Observing this state of things, the visitors who came from the Ashram vicinity ran to their homes and brought their vessels. Though these vessels were not enough, somehow we managed to carry out the functions.

O Papa who is kindness incarnate! For all the reasons mentioned above, I hotly discussed with you and insisted upon stopping the celebrations. Since these celebrations did not benefit anybody and as they created a great deal of disorder, you at last consented to discontinue them. By this I felt untold joy.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

Sadhakas and Sadhus

O ALL-PERVADING PAPA! Prior to these happenings, Bhajan in the Ashram had to be stopped. The object of Bhajan was to help the devotees in their spiritual progress. Gradually the number of devotees who took part in the Bhajan diminished. At last for Bhajan there were only three—we two and the daughter of your relative of Poorvashram. When the Ashram was opened, this girl gave up her education and joined the Ashram and was doing all kinds of service. When the time came for her to be married, I asked you, "For whose sake are we to continue Bhajan? As for me, there is no need of Bhajan and so also for you." So we stopped the daily Bhajan entirely.

O infinite Papa! The number of visitors to the Ashram went on increasing. Of these, you in many forms did not fail to receive some spiritual gain, but still you in some other forms were committing mistakes. Whenever they did so, we used to point out the mistakes to them and were advising them as to the way how they should act, whoever they be, whether they were visitors or Sadhakas, so that they might ultimately attain immortal happiness. But without understanding the aim with which we were admonishing them, they were on the other hand prompted by you within to turn against us. So the advice fell flat on them. They cast all kinds of slurs on us and left the Ashram. Just as when the mother, in order to guide her children on the right path, reprimands and even beats them, however pained their feelings be, they cannot but return to the mother: so also, as you are the mother of the universe, in spite of their going away from you, being drawn by the cords of love, they would come again to you and love you. You love such devotees all the more and grant them the experience of bliss. Yet, some of them kept themselves away. If even out of a sense of enmity they remembered you, such remembrance would help them in realizing their oneness with your eternal Being. So I am confident that one day or the other they will, drawn by the force of your infinite love, come back to you. I was therefore holding my soul in patience, as there was no need to be impatient in this matter.

O Papa, the lover of devotees! When thus some time passed, you received a letter from a devotee in Bombay in 1936. As he was seriously ill, he had often written you to go to Bombay for his sake. So I felt it would be well that you visited Bombay and gave him Darshan. I came to you and apprised you of my wish.

O Papa, the lover of the humble! At this time you were engaged in churning curds. As the Ashram was day by day expanding in its range, though we had some workers to carry on the outside work, the inside work was managed by ourselves, the inmates. Your love for the devotees in Bombay was so great that the moment I told you about my wish, you immediately stopped the churning of curds and getting up, with only one cloth on your body, sped rapidly to the railway station in order to catch the morning train itself.

O compassionate Papa! In Bombay after visiting the house of the devotee who called you and also the houses of other devotees, and giving them all the spiritual benefit of your Darshan and enjoying their love, you returned to the Ashram in a month's time.

O Papa, the embodiment of kindness! The devotees of other parts of India who came to know of your trip to Bombay wrote to you repeatedly inviting you to their places also, and you could not refuse to fulfil their wishes. So you started on a second tour in 1937. But as for me, I loved to remain in the Ashram and also due to other reasons I did not go with you even though you asked me to do so.

O all-pervading Papa! When you were away on tour, a person who is of course yourself in that form living near the Ashram, started the game of opposition against the Ashram. He conspired in various ways to get the Ashram under his control. Once he claimed a part of the Ashram property as his and created disturbance. On your return from the tour you took legal steps and set the matter right.

O blissful Papa! Although he quarrelled with us, it proved to be a quarrel between a mother and her child. It did not last long, and soon the love that existed between us and him revived and grew.

O all-pervading Papa! During the days when you wandered from place to place, on renouncing the worldly life, you were looked after tenderly by many Sadhus. So you had great reverence towards all itinerant Sadhus who came to the Ashram. I also as a consequence conceived love and respect for them. Owing to this reason, the Sadhus who were coming to the Ashram were permitted to stay in it as long as they liked. They used to stay in the Ashram from three to fifteen days. In the case of those who were ill, they were allowed to remain in the Ashram until they fully recovered from their illness. We tried our best to provide them with whatever they asked and thereby satisfy them.

O Papa, the lover of the humble! Whenever the Sadhus who were of course your forms came, we provided them with sleeping accommodation in the office, in the kitchen or on the verandah of the main Ashram. These Sadhus, according to their daily routine were performing Bhajan, worship and meditation. They were also at times given to drinking liquor and smoking Ganja and thereby causing a great deal of discord in the Ashram. Besides, on grounds of orthodoxy or for some other flimsy reasons they would quarrel among themselves. Some of them used to cook their own food and eat it separately. In such cases, if anybody by mistake touched them or their vessels, they would fly into a rage and refuse to take the meals. As a result of their quarrels, the Ashramites working in the office could not do their work peacefully. Some devotees, therefore, suggested that it would be well that we built a Dharamshala for the Sadhus. Accordingly, a Dharamshala was constructed near the office building. Even here they created a good deal of noise and disturbance. Sadhus who seduced women would also come to the Ashram. Whenever a Sadhu of this nature came to the Ashram with a woman, we would send the man away first and after ascertaining from the woman about her native place, we would send her back to her own place with sufficient money for her travelling expenses.

O all-pervading Papa! On account of this confused state of things we had to set a rule that Sadhus who came from distant places, would remain in the Ashram for only three days and those who came from nearby places only for a day. For the same reason householders were permitted to stay in the Ashram for only three to five days. In the case of those who wished to remain longer, I asked them to do their own cooking. To this arrangement you consented. From that time onwards the rule was in force for about two years.

O Papa, the beginningless and endless! You started again on a tour in 1938. This time the tour lasted for nine months. Only two days after you left on the tour, a group of devotees from the neighbouring town, who were your forms, came to the Ashram. Although you were not present in the Ashram, they wished to stay on for a long time.

O compassionate Papa! We got a wire from you that you had finished your tour and were returning to the Ashram. Knowing that your health was bad I went to the railway station to receive you and escort you to the Ashram. When I saw you, you looked weak and emaciated. On account of rheumatic pains you found it hard to get down from the railway carriage. So you had to be helped to alight from the compartment in which you sat. At the station you got into the car and immediately you handed over to me the purse of money you had, telling me to take responsibility in future of all money matters. Thereafter, although the account-keeping was done by others, during the disbursement of wages to the workers I used to be present.

O omnipresent Papa! As you had severe rheumatic pains you had attacks of giddiness and aches all over the body. You could not either walk or sit without help. All of us in the Ashram took great care of you. From that time I started to give you daily bath. As you found it difficult to sit down on the floor, arrangements were made through your devotees to get you a chair, a table, a cot and other elevated seats. Besides, this separate latrine for you, near the Ashram, was constructed.

O all-pervading Papa! Due to rheumatic pains you began putting on shirts. Before this you were using only one piece of cloth as Dhoti and another as upper cloth. We also began to prepare special diet for you in view of your indifferent health.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

Celebrations Again

O TRANSCENDENT PAPA! Many devotees did not appreciate our proposal to stop the celebrations in the Ashram. So when you were away from the Ashram on tour for the third time, *i.e.*, in 1938, one of your devotees suggested that the celebrations should be held, for by so doing, all devotees get an opportunity to assemble together at the Ashram and thereby derive spiritual benefit. Agreeing with him, you instructed us by letter to get ready big copper vessels. Accordingly I got them made. On your return all preparations for the celebration to be held in the following December were made.

O Papa, who pervades the entire universe! This time we did not send invitations to anybody as before, but the devotee who took the lead in this huge enterprise himself mailed invitations to devotees all over India. All the Ashram friends were under the impression that this devotee had taken up the entire responsibility of conducting the celebration himself. So on this occasion we did not receive much financial aid from them. Even on previous occasions we could not avoid running into debts. This time as the celebration took place on a grand scale, not like the previous ones, and the people who attended it were four times more in number, we fell a prey to an unusually large amount of debt. As a result, you in the form of creditors, came and demanded their dues. As we had no money to pay off the debts you wrote devotee for a loan for discharging the debts. The devotee cheerfully sent the needed amount as his gift. So it became possible for us to clear off the debts incurred for the celebration.

O Papa, the lover of the humble! Although I was not in favour of conducting any more celebrations, at the time when these celebrations used to be held in the past, many men, women and school children gathered in the Ashram during their vacation. You, in the form of the visitors on these occasions, paid the required money for preparing and distributing Paayasam on the main day. Besides, due to the enthusiasm of the devotees there was on these days more than the usual Bhajan, Harikatha and so on. So one day's celebration took place spontaneously.

O love-incarnate Papa! As the number of people who attended the celebrations was becoming larger and larger, the Ashramites could not bear the strain of heavy work which entailed on them. Therefore, we had to specially engage paid cooks for three days on these occasions. Thereafter we found it was necessary to employ two cooks permanently.

O Papa, the bestower of bliss! In 1944 we had your Shashtiabdapoorty celebration. At this time innumerable devotees gathered in the Ashram and the three days' functions were carried out with great eclat. A devotee of Bombay, with a view to present you sixty thousand rupees on that day, sent a circular letter in this respect to the devotees in different parts of India. The total amount collected came to one lakh of rupees including Rs. 28,000 donated for the construction of Sri Krishna Udyog Shala. The amount of Rs. 62,00 was offered to you as a gift on that occasion out of which a sum of Rs. 40,000 was utilized for the payment of all Ashram outstandings.

O Papa, the ocean of grace! After the opening of the Ashram, for some months we were carrying on without incurring any debts. Then our way of living was simple and easy. As years passed, the Ashram expanded and devotees belonging to various castes and grades of society started coming to the Ashram. We had to prepare for them food and other things of a higher style, with the result that the mode of living in the Ashram took a turn which meant more comforts and more expenses. However, we were paying off the debts in small instalments from the gift of money received by you from the devotees. But we could not, by small payments, liquidate the growing debts. After the sixtieth birthday, from money received as gift by you we were able to clear off all the Ashram debts.

O Papa, the love-incarnate! Some years after your Shashti-abdapoorty celebration, came the Silver Jubilee of your Sannyas in 1947. This expensive celebration lasted for three days.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

Ashram Service

(i) HOUSES FOR THE POOR

O PAPA, THE LOVER OF THE humble! Many poor people who were wanting clothes to cover their body, food to satisfy their hunger and houses to live in, were coming to the Ashram to apprise us of their state of abject poverty. Moreover, pregnant women, their husbands having abandoned them, finding no shelter anywhere, would come to the Ashram and tell us about their helpless and pitiable condition. How far could we help them in their distress? How many times have they to come to us seeking help? So we engaged some of them in the Ashram service.

O compassionate Papa! Beholding the distressed condition of people who sought aid from the Ashram, I felt great pain at heart. In the circumstances, I would speak with conviction that redress of their sorrows was possible firstly only for Mahatmas, and secondly for the Government. Therefore, I believed that the Mahatmas, instead of establishing and expanding their Ashrams, should build houses for the poor, suffering people who had no houses or land of their own, and also enable them to independently earn their livelihood. So also the rich people giving up their selfishness should freely contribute towards the welfare of the needy and distressed people.

O all-pervading Papa! When you went on the third tour, *i.e.*, in 1938, from the money you were sending to the Ashram, I constructed five houses for you in the form of the poor and needy people.

O infinite Papa! "In the world there is immense wealth, but some have more and some have less of it. If the Mahatmas and wealthy people see to it that all get it equally, the coming generation will follow suit. Even though all cannot be equally rich, at least every one will have enough to live happily." These words I spoke to you with an agitated mind. To this you said, "Whatever Ashram lands are in Ramdas' name, he is ready to part with them to those who are in need of them." Then I put forward the plea, "What is the good of giving them merely land; we must arrange also to provide them with houses to live in, and render financial aid for the first year's cultivation of the land so that they can thereby eke out an independent living." To this as well you gave your consent.

O Papa, the giver of bliss! In course of time we ourselves acquired fields and started cultivating them. Ashramites and other paid workers together did the work of sowing, transplanting seedlings, harvesting and all other kinds of work. Since these activities were dear to you, you were coming to see us when we were at work. We did the cultivation only to know whether the workers would be able to make a living by cultivating the land given to them.

O love-incarnate Papa! After some years you built more houses for some Ashram workers and gave them parts of the field which the Ashram was cultivating. Even though we had not sufficient funds to build all the houses for them we did so even by running into debts. We have so far constructed over fifty houses for the poor workers and more houses are under construction.

O Papa, the lover of the humble! From the start of the Ashram you had a great desire to impart education to the children living in the vicinity of the Ashram. If they had no education they would have, for their livelihood, to slave under others. Because a life of complete dependence upon others involves immense hardship and misery, you were bent upon giving education to the children. As it was my nature to obstruct you in all your undertakings, I objected to the carrying out of your ideal. We had to construct a school building and also provide food and clothing to the hungry and the naked among the children. I felt at the time that the Ashram expenses having increased enormously, and we were already in debts, how could we undertake this huge venture and assume all the responsibilities relating to the management of a school? Even if we imparted elementary education to the children, how would it be possible for them to go in for higher education? Otherwise, how would they be able to secure proper employment? Thereafter we would have to see that they get suitable jobs. For this, we would have to open another school for training them in handicrafts and cottage industries. Besides, there would be a need to build a boarding home for providing them with meals. Why all this trouble? But as you were enthusiastic in running a school, instead of coming in the way of every undertaking of yours, I agreed. Immediately you made your devotees aware of this scheme and many among them with all joy offered you the necessary funds. All of us in the Ashram with great zeal joined in the construction of the school building.

(ii) THREE R'S AND HANDICRAFTS

O Papa, the love incarnate! Although we had no idea of erecting a big building for the school, the plan made for it being an ambitious one, we had to carry it out. You admitted, "It is the will of Ram that we should have a huge building for the school." So the school building became an imposing one. Moreover, a suitable boarding house had also to be constructed. The opening ceremonies of these two buildings took place on your birthday in 1942. The school was named: 'Sri Krishna Vidyalaya.'

O compassionate Papa! With the object of the spiritual uplift of the children, you made a rule of holding daily prayers at the opening of the school in the morning and at the closing of it in the evening. Also you set the rule for children to attend the Ashram Bhajan every Monday morning and to hold Bhajan in the school every Thursday afternoon. In order to infuse enthusiasm into the children you were yourself attending the afternoon Bhajan. Besides, you had arranged to distribute Prasad at the end of the Bhajan. You, in the form of the teachers were also reading *Bhagavad Gita* to the children and explaining its meaning to them. Further, you were giving prizes to those of the boys who had learnt one chapter of the *Gita* by heart.

O Papa, the ocean of compassion! You were also providing the pupils free the necessary books and slates. In the form of the teachers you were training them in spinning yarn on Chakras.

O Papa, the bestower of bliss! You were celebrating the anniversary of the school every year for affording joy to the pupils, during which there were items of drama, sports and presentation of prizes to the children.

O Papa, the ocean of kindness! From the donations paid by a devotee you were presenting to the children annually five sets of dress. The spare sets of dress used to be kept in the boarding home. A mother was engaged as warden to look after the children. The routine was, when the children came in the morning, before attending school, they had first to take bath, put on washed dress and take conjee. At the midday interval they were again given a meal. On the closing of the school in the evening they would go to their respective homes. Workers were engaged for washing their clothes and to cook food for them. Whenever there was a celebration in the Ashram they took meals along with others in the Ashram and prior to their dispersal they would exhibit their skill in music and games.

O compassionate Papa! When you were about to start the school, two teachers who already trained in teaching, requested you to appoint them as teachers in the Ashram school as they did not get jobs elsewhere. In consideration of these unemployed teachers, you became more than ever zealous to complete the school structure as early as possible. Besides these two teachers, you engaged also others for the school work. For some years the work of the school went on very well owing to the sincere services of yourself in the forms of these teachers. But after some years all the teachers joined together and started to run the school as they liked. Consulting you only in a formal way the teachers with the Headmaster acted according to their own will and pleasure. In the end we discovered that they were apparently united but had conceived envy and ill-will with regard to each other. Of these teachers those whom you appointed first and who were at that time unemployed, who were of course your own forms, started criticising us to our face.

O Papa, the bliss giver! Day by day the school was progressing very well. Now the teachers of the school, who were your forms, were contributing with all their heart their capabilities towards the all-round uplift and success of the school. They taught the children with all affection and helped them in all possible ways so that they might grow up into intelligent people and earn their bread by independent means. All who came to the Ashram in those days, seeing the working of the school, were loud in their praise of it.

O Papa, the ocean of kindness! In order to run the school on proper lines we used to change the Headmaster whenever necessary. At last a new Headmaster came, who was no doubt trying his best to raise the school standard, but the one defect with him was that he was punishing the children heartlessly.

O gracious Papa! Despite our repeated advice and reprimand the Headmaster, who is your form, did not stop chastising the children with great severity. The other teachers also joined the Headmaster and behaved in an unseemly manner, making us understand that they were working in the school only to favour us. When you found fault with them in the matter of corporal punishment meted out to the children, they showed you an educational rule that you had no right to interfere in the workings of the school. To prevent further confusion, the school and the boarding home had to be closed. So all the teachers had to go away. For about two years the work of the school and boarding home having stopped, they were then handed over to the Harijan Welfare Department.

O universal Papa! Before two years had elapsed from the opening of the school, with a view to train the children, who had passed the elementary school, in some handicrafts, you opened a small department of handloom weaving. The shed in which this work was started was destroyed by fire, with the result you planned to have a bigger building, for the construction of which a devotee offered the necessary funds.

O Papa, the love incarnate! The institution was called the 'Sri Krishna Udyog Shala'. Here several kinds of handicrafts were taught and the work was going on beautifully. The subjects that were taught were: hand spinning, handloom weaving, dyeing yarn and cloth, hand printing, tailoring, horn work, leather work, etc. It was expected that the children who received instruction in any one of these handicrafts might be able to get employment and thereby earn their living. Some of these students are now having an independent living from the training they received here. We ourselves arranged for the sale of the institute products.

O gracious Papa! As we found that all sections in the Udyog Shala except handloom weaving and tailoring were working at a loss we concentrated only on those two sections and closed the rest. Later we made out that we were not able to run the institution and so handed it over, as a free gift, with building and all equipments included, to the Nileshwar Weavers' Co-operative Production and Sale Society. This institution is now carrying on its work.

(iii) POST OFFICE AND HOSPITAL

O all-pervading Papa! In Ramnagar—the place where our Ashram stands—we had no Post Office. For getting our daily mail we had to send an inmate of the Ashram to the Sub-Post Office in Kanhangad at a distance of about three miles. As our letters and parcels for transmission increased, we found it difficult and inconvenient to send daily one of the workers of the Ashram to such a distance. Hence some devotee suggested that we should apply to the Postal Department for opening a Post Office in Ramnagar itself. The Government in response opened a branch Post Office in one of the rooms of Sri Krishna Vidyalaya and it goes by the name: 'Anandashram Branch Post Office'.

O compassionate Papa! When we first opened Anandashram in Ramnagar, there was no dispensary or hospital for medical aid. Whenever any person was taken ill the patient would come to the Ashram and we used to treat the patient with Homoeopathic or first-aid remedies. But as days passed, the number of patients coming for medical aid increased. Then some devotees suggested that we should have a separate building in which we could carry on the treatment of the patients who sought medical aid. Accordingly, a house constructed by a devotee of the Ashram in memory of his departed daughter, was utilised with his permission for running a dispensary. A devotee who was at one time an inmate of the Ashram supplied us with necessary medicines. Later on, a doctor who came to the Ashram agreed to take charge of the dispensary. We appointed a staff of workers to help him. The devotees who lived far away from the Ashram in different towns and cities were sending medicines free for the dispensary.

The dispensary was working on sound lines. On an average one hundred persons were receiving free medical aid daily in the Ashram charitable dispensary.

O compassionate Papa! In the dispensary there were in all five persons on the staff and they were serving the out-patients with love and affection, and later by the financial help of some devotees we constructed also a building for in-patient and maternity wards. Sometimes we had to point out certain irregularities in the work of the staff although from the worldly standard what they did seemed to be right.

O universal Papa! We had already thought of closing down the hospital work as we were running short of funds and to manage the hospital was therefore found to be difficult. We asked the Government to run the hospital, but as they delayed to take it up, the dispensary discontinued to function for about two years. At last the Government took over the dispensary and hospital and are managing the same.

O Papa, who is everything and beyond everything! In this way when we started any charitable work, for some time we received great approbation from the people about its work and progress. Although for some time the work went on well, the paid staff made us understand in many ways that they were working in the Ashram institutions in order to do favour to us. Moreover, day by day, the receipts of the Ashram by way of donations diminished, with the consequence that we were obliged to close down all of them.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

Your Task

O PAPA, THE ENDLESS AND beginningless! A human being born as such places before himself any one aim to be achieved in life. Commonly, children try to follow the path trodden by their parents. If the parents are of a charitable nature, their children aspire to be like them. If the parents attain name and fame, likewise their children wish to attain name and fame. Similarly, if the parents have amassed wealth, their children develop the same tendency. However, to accomplish any one of these aims they should have intense and concentrated aspiration for it. If a man places before him God-realization as his goal he must intensely thirst for it.

O Purushottama Papa! We established this Ashram with the sole object that those who wish to realize your eternal Being may come to it and achieve the goal by following the path of devotion and by practising universal love and service. But, you in the forms of devotees and the disciples, when they first came here, evinced great love and devotion with a view to fulfil their aim in realizing your immortal Being. But later on, straying away from the path they sought the very pleasures of the worldly life which they had once renounced. Besides this, you in these forms picked faults in us and got angry with us, and slandered us in many ways and lastly creating confusion in the Ashram left it with a mind throughly unsettled and disgruntled. When we saw that you in these forms played in this manner, it became evident that we could not succeed in attaining the high ideals we laid down at the opening of the Ashram.

O Papa, the all-pervading! Once you came in the form of a Sannyasi and displayed unique devotion. But you, who dwelt in him, being not prepared to reveal yourself to him, played a different game. So having abandoned the path of Self-realization, he acted objectionably and brought about his downfall and finally left the Ashram. You came and played also as another great Sannyasi and lived in the Ashram. But in a short time you showed yourself in him as one hankering for sense pleasures and this fact came to our knowledge. Your Lila is really wonderful!

O world-regulator Papa! You in the forms of many business men came to the Ashram giving up their business with the one object of realizing the eternal Truth and for doing Sadhana to that effect. But, as you were not willing to manifest yourself in them, after some time, causing their minds to flow world-wise, you made them plan to start business in the Ashram. When they found that we did not agree with their proposals, they left the Ashram in a state of dissatisfaction and frustration.

O Papa, the refuge of all! You visited the Ashram in several other forms and gave us intolerable trouble, and we had to eject them out by force. This is indeed your Lila. On one side you play as a Guru and are ready to render help to the aspirants who come to you. On the other side you play in many forms as seekers of God. But you, who are dwelling in them, gave them a short-lived devotion for you and before they attained the goal deprived them of it, by bringing down their minds back to the old state, that is, to the pursuit of sense pleasures. You made them go to the length of acting reprehensibly. If you merely by external sight and contact seek to help them to realize your infinite Being, they cannot of course succeed. You ought to reveal yourself in them for the highest spiritual experience.

O Sadguru! As you are the form of all Gurus, if you do not manifest yourself in some devotees at least, it cannot be considered that the Ashrams, Maths and temples you have started are of any spiritual value. Still it is an undeniable fact that you have sown the seed of Ramnam in the hearts of those who are living in your presence and in those others who come in your contact, and have also granted them the taste of infinite bliss and peace. You have afforded them faith in Ramnam and given them the necessary impetus to repeat it more and ever more. Most of them having staunch faith in the repetition of the Name, have considerably advanced on the path. Thus their minds having really expanded, they have become truly loving and generous. Can they be perfectly satisfied merely by this much of achievement? Until now you have not created in them a burning aspiration to have you and you alone. You have not yet given them the intense aspiration, by an inner renunciation, for realizing their oneness with you. You have not so far made them experience eternal bliss and peace. Great and eternal as you are, I can emphatically declare that the Ashram and similar other institutions cannot be said to have fulfilled their purpose until the devotees who resort to them have realized the bliss and peace which you are enjoying.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

God-Realization—the Aim

O PAPA, THE LOVER OF devotees! You have implanted in the hearts of people a desire to save money for themselves and their kith and kin. But you being the mother of all your children, with the intention of making them happy, take money from one son and give it to another. Really all people in the world are your children and so you are getting money from the rich among them and spending it on others who are in need.

O Papa, the lover of the humble! Just as the food taken by the mouth is assimilated by all parts of the body, so also all that you do is for the welfare of the entire world. But as you, in several forms, do not take advantage of your teachings and activities but cling to the idea that they are separate from the world and behave accordingly, they are not happy. When we eat good food it is absorbed only in the healthy part of the body and not in the unhealthy part, although these parts are also ourselves and our own. Similarly, those who do not derive any benefit by your action and those who derive it are both yourself and your own. Still, in order to cure the disease in the body we treat ourselves with medicines; so we have to strive to remove ignorance and bring eternal happiness to all people who are ourselves and our own.

O love-incarnate Papa! Besides those of whom I have described above, the rich, the poor, the destitute, the miserable, the evil-minded and repentant people, the moment they see you, place full faith in you and come to the Ashram. Of these, some come with the aim of taking refuge in you, some others with a view to spend their life in your company, still others come to you to get initiated into Sannyas, keenly aspiring for the experience of the bliss of God-realization. Some others come to the Ashram and having their own lodging, join the Ashram service and carry on their activities with all faith and love. Those who are given shelter in the Ashram of our own accord, do all kinds of Ashram service with love and enthusiasm.

O Papa, the bestower of bliss! I had really a great desire that those who have settled down in the Ashram should be blessed with the realization of the supreme and immortal Being. We have provided them with all possible facilities. This is true in regard to both visitors and also those who remain permanently in the Ashram, the object being that their minds might flow towards your immortal Being. Besides, in order to prevent their minds from being diverted to the needs of the body, we have provided them with food, clothing and shelter as far as possible. In the case of some devotees, whenever they felt a desire even for trifling things we used to provide them with all the things needed so that this desire might not come in the way of their spiritual advancement. But all our efforts proved in vain because you had not given them intense aspiration to realize you.

O compassionate Papa! Whenever I found fault with anybody, since you have given me the experience that I am the entire universe, I really found fault with myself, without seeing difference between myself and that person. For example, though we love all parts of our body equally, when there is an abscess on any part, we apply strong medicines or use a knife to cut it open only with the idea of making that part healthy. In the same way, since the whole world is myself, when I find fault with anybody with a view to remove his shortcomings, I do so in fact with regard to myself. This they do not understand, and argue with me assuming the attitude of an opponent. Besides, for their erring ways of life when I admonish them they would rather keep themselves away from me than take advantage of the advice which I give them. As this entire universe is myself, just as I cannot discard any part of my body taking it to be extraneous to me, so I cannot treat anybody with a feeling of distantness or separateness.

O blissful Papa! In this way, however much we were anxious about the inner progress of these people to whom we gave refuge in the Ashram, you dwelling in every one of their hearts did not give them the aspiration for the Reality; they loved and served you only to achieve transitory happiness. Had they aspired for eternal bliss they would have got not only that but also all other things needed in their lives. Without knowing this they made no attempt to get eternal happiness. On the contrary, we noticed later that they were lacking the intensity they had when they first came to the Ashram. Therefore, I was feeling often that the Ashram had done more harm than good. So if any one expressed the idea of starting an Ashram, I would tell him, "Don't start an Ashram. If you do, people by joining it will only be caught up in confusion, and the day for their attaining real happiness will be put off. Moreover, those who started the Ashram would be mentally ruffled."

O all-pervading Papa! So many people without themselves realizing the immortal Reality open Ashrams with a view to spiritually uplift others. They don't consider what their own life was, why they renounced everything and whether their aim had been fulfilled. As a result, after opening an Ashram their minds which had turned inward came out and got entangled in the maze of external activities; thereby their Sadhana was cut short. Thus their condition became worse than what it was when they were living the worldly life. Once their mind descends to lower levels, their desires for worldly pleasures wax strong and they themselves fall into the ditch and drag others also down into it.

O omnipresent Papa! Please therefore do not give the urge to any Sannyasi or anybody else to establish an Ashram. In our body which is a miniature universe there are different kinds of bacterium causing various functions in our system. Every moment countless of these are created, preserved and destroyed. Thus the process of creation, preservation and destruction is going on continuously and simultaneously in our body. We are however unaffected by these. So also, after one realizes his oneness with you who is the entire universe and beyond, he remains unaffected by the process of creation, preservation and destruction constantly going on in the universe. O Papa, the beloved of your devotees! Please inspire only the blessed forms of yours who are established in such exalted experience to undertake the work of spiritually uplifting humanity.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

Tour of 1949

O PAPA, THE BESTOWER of bliss! After you returned from tour in 1938 you did not leave the Ashram on tour again for some years. As your health was not good I was asking you not to go on tours. At last in 1949, a devotee of Limbdi who was badly ill at Bangalore addressed you a letter requesting you to go to him. Drawn by the love of your devotees you decided to go on tour again. So in the company of a devotee you prepared to start. As for me, I was caught in a dilemma. By nature I did not like to go on travels. I felt if I did not go with you this time there would be nobody to take care of your body and give you food at regular intervals. So I started with you taking with me some Ashramites fearing that if I left them in the Ashram they would create discord and dissension.

O all-pervading Papa! Prior to our leaving the Ashram, we informed beforehand, through correspondence, some of your devotees and we went to the places where we were invited. In all the places we visited we had not to face the least trouble and we lived as comfortably and happily as in the Ashram. At this time some Maharajas invited you to their palaces and served you with all devotion.

O love-incarnate Papa! Wherever we went, thousands of people used to come to you for Darshan. As their hearts were filled with great love and devotion for you, the moment they had your Darshan their hairs stood on end and tears of joy flowed down their eyes. Some devotees finding you in their homes were so transported with joy that they forgot their body and sat still without knowing what to do.

O Papa, the lover of devotees! Wherever you went, devotees would assemble together and perform Bhajan in loud voice with great spiritual fervour. At other times they would sit in your divine presence and swim in the ocean of bliss.

O Papa, the lover of the humble! Having been attracted by the love of the devotees, with a view to infuse divine joy into them, you were thereafter going on tour every year for several years. As for me, I was beginning to get tired of the tours and did not like to come with you. The devotees living in the Ashram, to whom we entrusted the responsibility of running it when we are away on tour, were feeling tired of it. Further, whenever we went on tour, the friends who invited us to their place had to look after the devotees who accompanied us, and also extend their hospitality to the ever increasing number of devotees who came for your Darshan. How far could this state of things continue? Whenever we visited any place, people came for your Darshan in large numbers and everyday was like a huge celebration. Everybody knows how difficult it is to manage even ordinary celebrations for long periods. How could then the devotees escape from being put to trouble when we visit them for a number of days thrice a year? So some of them came to feel that it would be well that we do not go so often to their places. But there were also devotees who liked to have us with them any number of times. At some places we became objects of ridicule as people remarked that we were on tours for collecting funds.

O Papa, the ocean of kindness! In all the places we visited, I would ask our hosts to offer the visitors refreshments, etc., as hosts and visitors are both mine. When the devotees presented you with money and cloth I would distribute them as Prasad to the poor visitors with the object that the minds of these devotees might turn towards the goal of God-realization. Some devotees who came to know of this did not appreciate my giving away things like this.

O blissful Papa! Another habit of mine was that I used to admonish devotees—on the basis of my feeling that I am their eternal child—when I saw them living and acting with the sole object of pursuing transitory pleasures, whoever they may be, rich or poor. As they did not understand that I was their child they would take ill my advice and lose the opportunity of achieving true happiness.

O universal Papa! Wherever we went, the devotees were prepared to treat you and those who accompanied you with hospitality; but in some places they did not attend to the visitors who came to see you. The reason was that while you and they were absorbed in bliss when talking with them, their minds would not turn to the visitors and they were not even aware of their presence. Whenever I became aware of this I would suggest to the host to turn his attention towards the visitors. Some liked this, but some did not.

O omnipresent Papa! When we were on tour the people of the houses in which we stayed were happy over our visit. As they had immense devotion for you, whenever I wished to give anybody anything I would induce them to freely give away things which they did. By this they felt happy. Moreover, they were never satisfied however much they gave you.

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

The World Tour

O COMPASSIONATE PAPA! One of your devotees expressed his desire to build an Ashram at his place. He thought that if you lived in the Ashram for six months in the year, the devotees living in places near this Ashram could conveniently come to you for Darshan and derive spiritual benefit. So the devotee built an Ashram at his place in your name. At first it was decided to name the Ashram "Ram-Ashram." The friend who was travelling with you during your early tours suggested that the Ashram might be called—"Ramdas Ashram." Hence the Ashram at present goes by that name.

O kindness-incarnate Papa! There are some devotees who have unusually great love and devotion to you. As they are very generous in nature, however much they serve you, they are not satisfied. When I meet such liberal-minded devotees I would feel immense joy. In order that they might soon attain God-realization I would ask them to freely utilise their wealth in charities.

O love-incarnate Papa! Among such devotees there was one mother who was planning to go on a foreign tour. You had also thought of going on a world tour. You were saying, "Ram will take Ramdas abroad some day." This mother came to know of your idea; so she felt it would be well if she could accompany you on the foreign tour. She broached the subject to you and you agreed to go. She sold some shares and articles of value and collected enough money for the journey expenses. Another devotee, who was your form, also started with her. Besides those two persons, yourself, myself and another devotee of the Ashram, in all five persons, made themselves ready to go on the tour. At all the places we visited, this mother served you with all love. Your daily food was prepared by her. Besides, she was regularly doing Japa of the Mantra with which she was initiated by her Guru, who is none other than yourself.

O infinite Papa! Wherever we went in the course of this tour, the devotees treated us with all love and affection, and in many places the devotees persuaded us to stay in their houses. Hence the mother who undertook to take us on the tour had not to spend as much money as she first expected. She purchased for us a recording machine, cine camera and many other things. She had fixed up a certain amount to be spent for our world tour and she did not want to retain the balance left over. Therefore, she spent it in buying for the use of the Ashram a motor car.

O Papa, the ocean of compassion! As you are pervading everywhere and you are yet beyond everything, we did not feel that we were travelling in strange lands. The sense of difference between India and abroad was never felt. Just as we speak of the parts of our own body as if they are different from one another, similarly our own country, another's country, though both are ours, we have to say other countries are foreign. So all who live in foreign places are ourselves and ours. It was for this reason that all the people in these countries loved us and ardently listened to your spiritual discourses. They had the same love, devotion and reverence for you as in India. On account of the unbounded love of the devotees whom we contacted in foreign countries, we completed our world tour without the least difficulty and at last safely reached Ceylon. There was some disturbance among the Ashramites who joined us there. In the end, peace prevailed and we came back to the Ashram. The same mother who took us on this Bhu-Pradakshina brought us back to the Ashram and leaving us there returned to her place.

O grace-incarnate Papa! When we were on the world tour many of the devotees of the countries we visited promised that they would come to the Ashram here. As there were no proper accommodation and convenience for them, in the event of their visit to the Ashram, the mother who took us on the tour offered enough funds for constructing a new building with all the necessary fittings and equipment. We built this building in a great hurry. We furnished the rooms in it with chairs, tables and cots. In all, the building cost us about thirty-five thousand rupees. Before we went on tour abroad, this mother, in co-operation with another friend, had constructed a separate small room with attached bathroom and lavatory for your use on the left side of the main Ashram building. Besides this, the mother joined with others in rendering financial help for the Silver Jubilee celebration which took place in the Ashram in 1955.

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

Likhit Japa Yajna

O PAPA, THE OCEAN OF kindness! People are spending for charitable purposes large amounts of money. But instead of aspiring for eternal happiness they aim at transitory pleasures. At this I feel acute pain. So I do not resist admonishing them for this. In some cases they did not take my advice in the right spirit but suffered great pain. Therefore, I pray to you, who are the lover of your devotees, to reveal yourself in their hearts and grant them immortal bliss in this life itself.

O blissful Papa! The devotee who took the lead in collecting money to present you with a purse on the occasion of your 60th birthday celebration wrote to us whether he could collect twenty-five thousand rupees and offer the amount to me on the occasion of the twenty-fifth year of my renunciation. When consulted in this matter by you, I replied, "We are tired of appealing for funds. In future, we should not beg for money but accept only what is given or remitted to us by devotees of their own accord. Instead, let devotees do 25 crores of Ramnam Japa. This will help them to soon realize your immortal existence." On hearing this, with great enthusiasm, you wrote to this particular devotee what I had said and also to the devotees in other places, besides publishing in *The Vision* that the Ashram had undertaken a Likhit Japa Yajna of twenty-five crores of Ramnam. All your devotees in different parts of the world, with great zeal and earnestness, started to write the Mantra given to them by you and other Gurus who are your forms.

O Papa, the bestower of bliss! As the day of the celebration approached, the books on which the Mantras were written poured into the Ashram from various places and countries. As it was not possible to count the Japa up to the date of the celebration, we fixed an earlier date for it and counted the Japa till that date. Still in two years the figure of Japa rose to 32,53,33,158. If we had taken into account all the Japa that came later than the fixed date, the total would have been about forty crores.

O Papa, who is really the form of the divine Mother! I had never dreamt that such a celebration would be held in the Ashram. Moreover, I had not the least desire to have it. Yet, because of your enthusiasm and of all others who are your forms, we were obliged to celebrate the completion of the Likhit Japa Yajna.We received innumerable letters from the devotees that they proposed to come to the Ashram for the celebration. But as we did not possess any funds and on the contrary we were deep in debts, I did not go forward in making preparations for the celebration and remained silent.

O infinite Papa! It was not at all strange for the Ashram to run into debts. Every month as the amounts received as donations were far less than the expenses incurred by the Ashram, we were always running into debts, but by the help of the devotees we would liquidate them. Before we started on the world tour we had paid off all the Ashram debts. Towards the expenses of the Ashram during your absence on tour we had to borrow five thousand rupees from a Bombay devotee. As this devotee considered the Ashram as his own, he told us that he would not take back the money advanced by him. This money was used in the Ashram to meet the deficit during our absence on tour. No sooner we returned from the world tour than we again became a prey to debts; so I did not want to undertake any new work.

O all-pervading Papa! Meanwhile, money started pouring in towards the expenses of the celebration from the devotees. You were often telling me that I should undertake the re-building of the office owing to its dilapidated condition, and since the amounts intended for the celebration had come much earlier than the day of celebration, we thought of reconstructing the office building out of that money. We forthwith started the work because the furniture and windows of the office were being eaten up by white ants. Another reason was that there was no room for stocking the Ashram publications in the office, which were till then kept in big book-cases in the Udyog Shala. Moreover, the office work was carried on in two or three buildings. So co-ordination in the work was found not possible. Again, the house by the side of the office occupied by Sadhus had cracks in the walls and so we had to construct a new building for their use and incorporate the Dharmashala with the office building by joining the foundations of these two buildings into one. We received from a Bombay devotee five thousand rupees, for constructing a separate room in the new office building for securely stocking the Likhit Japa Yajna books. For this purpose we had purchased twelve steel cupboards. The cost of the building came to about nineteen thousand rupees.

O Papa, the ocean of kindness. On account of the construction of this building a large portion of the money received for the celebration was spent. So whenever you hurried me up for making the preparations for the celebration, I did not encourage you and asked you to go at a slower pace. About five hundred families wrote to us that they would attend the celebration. To prepare food for the expected countless number of devotees, some of the inmates of the Ashram arranged to procure the services of sixty cooks from Trichur. To prepare tiffin we had to engage about forty people who were the workers in a Mangalore hotel.

O Papa, the giver of bliss! Even after we made these preparations I had not any enthusiasm to proceed in the matter. At last I made a list of all the requirements of this celebration. Grocers came forward to supply all the necessary provisions, etc., and soon our store rooms were filled with the best available articles for use in the celebration. Next, workers came to construct Pandals. When I saw them I awoke as it were from a dream. For constructing the Pandals we had no bamboos and no coconut leaf mats. However, by the help of about one hundred workers and by the aid of other devotees the Pandals were got ready within eighteen days. I wondered how you managed to get ready all these things. The devotees were carried away by enthusiasm and the Ashram and the Pandals were beautifully decorated and the celebration took place on a grand scale. Many Mahatmas, Sadhus, devotees, musicians, lecturers and Harikatha performers assembled together and embellished the celebration.

O compassion-incarnate Papa! Although the day was celebrated with great pomp and circumstance, I was not satisfied with regard to four things. First, there was scarcity of water and a lot of trouble was caused by it. Second, the lavatories temporarily built were unsatisfactory. Third, the Sadhus who came for the celebration joined together and beat one of the Ashramites, with the result that we had to drive away many poor people along with them. Fourth, some devotees introduced the system of allowing people through the gate only on the presentation of tickets, in order to control the crowd. Although the tickets were distributed free and thousands of people were fed, there were some who did not at all get meals and were put to trouble. I was then so deeply pained that I felt we were not at all fit to conduct such functions on this scale. However, all the programmes of the celebration were carried out with great fervour and all the people who attended it derived unique joy and ecstasy.

CHAPTER FORTY

Burden of Debts

O ALL-PERVADING PAPA! It was decided that you would spend six months in the year at Ramdas Ashram in Bhavnagar. As you found it was not possible to spend so much time in that Ashram, we stayed there for only two months in the year. After the Silver Jubilee celebration we went on tour only twice. On the second occasion I did not accompany you, but remained in the Ashram and started Bhajan for eight hours a day during which Ramnam was sung aloud by the devotees. This programme was gone through with the aim that you should remain in good health, but your health having failed at Madras, I had to go to you at the place where you then resided. You had to return to the Ashram for recouping your health. Again, after you were restored to your normal health we started to go to Porbandar. There one of the Sadhus, who was none other than yourself, with the help of his devotees had built a temple of Hanuman and you were invited for the installation of the images of Hanuman, Rama, Sita and Lakshman in that temple. The devotee who built Ramdas Ashram had also liberally contributed towards the erection of this temple. With the help and at the instance of this devotee you installed the images, accompanied by great grandeur.

O all-pervading Papa! As your health was not good we decided not to move out of the Ashram on tours again for some years.

For various reasons my mind being depressed, I felt that we should never again go on tours. If the devotees want spiritual help let them come to the Ashram. Moreover, a man who had seen your face on return from your last tour sent word that as there were signs of your health failing in the ensuing years, you should not leave the Ashram for at least three years. For these reasons we stopped going on travels, but increased the Ramnam Japa more than before in the Ashram.

O Papa, the kindness incarnate! It is no wonder that when the question of money was mooted, the minds of people descended to a lower plane. This was perhaps because in the books that you wrote during your Sadhana you had definitely stated that a Sadhaka should not handle money at all. You were setting an example by not having any money with you in those days. But now, as you are pervading everywhere, and having become everything, just as we cannot keep away any part of our body, knowing as we do that the entire body is ours, similarly you cannot in your present state reject money. Besides, for carrying out the ideals of the Ashram you cannot but collect and keep money with you.

O Papa, the infinite Being! Just as every song has a burden, so our Ashram has a burden of debts. Although there were no debts for the Ashram during the first few months after it was opened, thereafter we had to face debts every month. But you were paying them off through the devotees who are your forms.

O Papa, the ocean of kindness! Though at the time of clearing off the debts we resolved every time not to have debts any more, the monthly outstandings did not decrease. In the last celebration we had received all the money necessary for the expenses, but as we took up the work of construction of buildings and also utilised the available funds for other purposes we had to run into debts. However, some devotees in Bombay joined together and paid off part of the debts. One of these devotees paid off the rest of the debts a year later. This devotee and his family had come to the rescue of the Ashram in the same way on many previous occasions. Since then the Ashram has been entirely free from financial liabilities.

O blissful Papa! When we last paid off the debts we wished again that we should not at least in future be burdened with them. Accordingly we stopped the annual celebrations and we dispensed with the services of such of the workers of the Ashram as were appointed on salaries. But their love for you was so great that some of them did not leave the Ashram service and are working in the Ashram even till today although they are not paid any salary. It is proposed to present these workers with lands by purchasing them from others. From the beginning the paid workers in the Ashram were carrying on their work neatly and regularly and with all love as though they were doing it in their own homes.

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

Saints

O PAPA, THE ENDLESS AND beginningless! From the time of the opening of the Ashram you had been coming to the Ashram in the forms of many worshipful saints. As they were the parents of the whole universe they came to Anandashram in order to give us, their children, the rare joy of their Darshan. Their mission in life is to shower on their children their grace so that they might realize eternal happiness.

O Papa, the giver of bliss! Mahatmas are those who, having pervaded everywhere, are still transcendent. So wherever they go, in whichever house they reside, they consider the place and the house their own. So the Mahatmas, who are our mother and father, felt immense joy while in Anandashram. In certain circumstances, even if we committed any mistakes, they used to forgive us as we are their children. Some of them offered to serve in the Ashram and when I agreed they did it with all love and joy.

O infinite Papa! Victory and victory to these Mahatmas who are giving joy and peace to all people. I, your little child, prayed to you that these Mahatmas might shower their grace on all who are caught in the meshes of worldly life and grant them true and lasting happiness.

O all-pervading Papa! When you play as a worldly person you do so taking yourself as a mere body. But when you play as a

Guru you do so with the full consciousness that you are the entire universe and also beyond it. Whether you play as a Guru or as a worldly being, so far as the body is concerned there is no difference of any kind in both cases. Just as the father and mother, having body-consciousness, love their children and relations, so also the Guru realizing the whole universe as his body, loves his disciples, devotees and all beings in the universe.

O Papa, who is infinite kindness! It is natural that all human beings love those who love them. We love more those who do things for our good. When we get anything which we love, we wish that those whom we love should also get it. In like manner, those who have attained eternal bliss, wish the rest of the world should experience the same bliss. They extend their love equally to those who are related to them or any other person who goes to them. The Mahatmas will show more interest and attention to those persons who are depending upon them for their spiritual progress and realization of the Eternal, as also those who aspire for material gains. They will however be more concerned with those who aspire for the Eternal. Thus, the Mahatmas may appear to be loving some people more and some less. Those who do not understand them, seeing such apparent differences in the love of the Mahatmas, find fault with them. But as saints are playing with full consciousness, that they are the universe, they are always free from such blemishes, as whatever they do is for *themselves* and not for *others*.

O compassionate Papa! If we take our own body as an example do we not see difference in all parts of it from head to foot? Is there no variety in the activities of these parts? What the hand does cannot be done by the leg and *vice versa*. The work of the eye cannot be done by the ear; the work of the ear cannot be done by the nose. Each organ can perform only its own work but not of others. So we toil hard with the hands and feed the mouth.

We do not feel, nor do the limbs themselves feel: "Why should the hands work and the mouth eat?" Besides, as we take the body as ourselves and all things are done for the sake of the body, we have no reason to feel sorry that the hands alone are doing so much work. In fact, the hand is at once ourselves and ours, and there is no reason to feel jealous of the mouth because it eats what is produced by the hand, because the mouth is ourselves and ours and what was done was for our own sake. In the same way, those who have attained the knowledge that they are the universe and also beyond it, give one and not another, care for one and not for another, as all are they and theirs, and they do all actions for their own sake. So there is absolutely nothing wrong in their actions. But this knowledge or experience you have not granted to all people. It is for this reason they behold frailties in Mahatmas. Therefore, I entreat you, who are Purushottama, to bless all people with the vision of your eternal Being.

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

Spiritual Perfection

O PURUSHOTTAMA PAPA! who is all-pervading and all-transcendent, yet my divine mother and father! You caused me to be born in your infinite creation and made me pass through, for twenty-five years, all the pains and joys of the worldly life. Being your child enveloped in complete ignorance, I felt happiness as happiness, pain as pain and grief as grief. At this time I could not understand why you gave me all these experiences. I did not know then that there is a state beyond grief and joy. But, all-compassionate as you are on the lapse of twenty-five years, you brought me into your presence and gave me the knowledge that there is a Truth beyond pain and pleasure and that all the manifest creation and the pairs of opposites born of sight and hearing have sprung from it. You then blessed me with the keen longing to know what this supreme Reality is. Besides, in a short time you gave me the realization of it. As a consequence I got the vision that I am the entire universe and also am transcending it. Now I am convinced that in this world-creation whatever I saw and heard and whatever things that related to pains and pleasures are perfectly natural. Moreover, I came to know that in your dynamic Being these opposites are alike. With this knowledge and experience, having become your child, looking upon you as the universal Mother, I am currently engaged in all actions in accordance with the movements of your universal nature.

O Papa, the ruler of the universe! Your greatness is indescribable. You are not only pervading the world, you are also the world and beyond it. Before granting me this exalted experience, you kept me in the consciousness that I was a mere body. In this condition my mind, not enjoying serenity and peace, was running hither and thither. I was then a prey to all kinds of thoughts regarding my body and those of others. When I was interested in others, I was obsessed by the thought that they were either different or separate from me. On gaining your presence my restless mind, by your grace, started concentrating itself on your eternal Being. Still, at times my mind, as was its habit, wandered here and there. At last owing to fullness of your grace when it was in tune with your immortal Being, it became for some period calm and serene. After realizing your supreme Being, when my mind came down to external consciousness which was till then making me think that I was a mere body, now granted me the experience that the whole universe is myself and I am also beyond it and it attained true bliss. My Atmic experience made me feel that my eternal life cannot be burnt by fire or wetted by water. I became aware that you granted my sublimated mind the signs and attributes of your eternal Being. Your sole object was to bless me with the rare experience of the everlasting bliss of your immortal existence.

O Purushottama Papa who is at once omnipresent and transcendent! Having manifested yourself in various forms, you are enacting this world Lila. Always victory, victory to you!

It is my wish that no corrections of any type should be made in the future editions of this book.

Om Sri Ram Jaya Ram Jaya Jaya Ram

Glossary

Adharma	.. Unrighteousness
Ajapa Japa	.. A special method of repeating God's name
Ajna	.. Sixth centre in the Sushumna through which the Kundalini rises
Ajnani	.. One who is ignorant of the Self
Akhanda Bhajan	.. Repetition of God's name continuously without break
Arati	.. Waving lights before the Deity during worship
Asan	.. A seat or yogis posture
Ashram	.. Abode of a saint
Atman	.. Supreme Soul
Atmic	.. Relating to the Supreme Soul
Bhajan	.. Religious music
Bhu-Pradakshina	.. Going round the world
Bilva	.. A tree whose leaves are sacred to Siva
Darshan	.. Visit or Vision
Dharmashala	.. Rest House
Diwali	.. Lamp Festival
Ekanath Shasti	.. Sixth day of the lunar fortnight sacred in the name of Ekanath Maharaj
Ganesh Chaturthi	.. Fourth day of the lunar fortnight sacred in the name of Lord Ganesh
Ganja	.. Indian hemp
Goshala	.. Cow shed
Guru (Gurudev)	.. Spiritual preceptor
Guru Mantra	.. A mystic word or words initiated by the Guru
Hanuman Jayanti	.. The birthday of Hanuman

Harikatha	A religious discourse accompanied by music
Japa	Repetition of God's name
Japa-mala	Rosary used in Japa
Jeevanmukta	A liberated soul while living in the body
Jnani	One who has attained Self-knowledge
Kula Guru	Family Spiritual preceptor
Kundalini	Serpent power — the spiritual energy lying dormant in all individuals
Likhit Japa Yajna	The worship of God by writing His name repeatedly
Lila	The divine play
Linga	Phallic symbol
Mahalaya Amavasya	An auspicious New Moon day in the Hindu almanac
Mahatma	A high-souled person
Makara Sankranti	The day on which the sun moves into Makara Rasi (Capricornus sign of the Zodiac)
Mantra	A mystic word or words
Math	Hindu monastery
Murthi	Image
Naivedya	An offering of eatables to a deity
Namaskar	Salutation
Naraka Chaturdashi	The 14th day of the dark lunar fortnight on which the demon Naraka was killed by Sri Krishna
Paayasam	A sweet pudding
Panchamrita	An aggregate of five sweet things
Pandal	Temporary shelter made of mats
Pradakshina	Circum-ambulation
Prasad	Food offered to God
Puja	Ritualistic worship

Punya Tithi	The lunar day on which a holy person departed from the world. (Death anniversary).
Puranas	Books of Hindu mythology
Purushottama	Supreme Godhead
Purushottama Yoga	Union with the Supreme Godhead
Purvashram	Pre-Sannyas period in life
Poorvashram	Pre-Sannyas period in life
Ram	God
Ram Mantra	An incantation containing the word Ram
Ram Nam	Name of Ram
Ram Navami	The birthday of Sri Ramachandra
Sadguru	True spiritual preceptor
Sadhaka	Spiritual aspirant
Sadhana	Spiritual practice
Sadhus	Holy persons; Saints
Sahaja	Natural state
Sahasrara	The thousand-pettalled lotus in the cerebrum
Samadhi	A saint's tomb or trance condition
Sandhya	Ritualistic worship performed by caste Hindus every day at dawn and dusk
Sannyas	The monastic life; the last of the four stages of life
Sannyasi	Hindu monk
Sannyasini	A female Hindu monk
Saraswat Guru	A Guru belonging to the Saraswat community
Sari	An Indian woman's wearing cloth
Sattwa	The quality of light, harmony and peace
Seva	Service
Shastiabdapoorty	Completion of sixty years of life
Shiva Linga	Image of Shiva

Siddhis	Occult powers
Sivaratri	The night on which special worship is offered to Shiva annually
Sumangali	A caste Hindu woman whose husband is alive
Swami	A prefix used before the name of Sannyasis
Tamas	The quality of dullness, delusion and darkness
Tirtha	Holy water
Tulsi	A plant sacred to Vishnu—a deity of the Hindu Trinity
Udyog Shala	Industrial School
Upanayanam	Sacred Thread ceremony initiating into Brahmacharya
Vairagi	A person of intense renunciation
Veda Mantra	Incantation from any of the four great original sacred books of the Hindus
Vidyalaya	School
Virat Purusha	The God in the form of the universe
Yati	An ascetic